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**“Good citizens and gentlemen”: Public and private  
space at the South African College, 1880 – 1918.**

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**BA (Hons) (UCT)**

**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of**

**Master of Arts in the Department of Historical Studies**

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## DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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University of Cape Town

## Abstract

This thesis examines the nature of the distinction between public and private space at the South African College (SAC) between 1880 and 1918. By viewing the College within increasingly wide lenses of analysis, examining the micro-level of student experience, to situating the College within its immediate, national and imperial location, the thesis indicates the ways in which institutions should be seen as products of, and permeable to, their historical contexts.

Chapter one begins by examining the gendered identity formation of the College students. This is followed by an in-depth examination of the role of the College Council, in particular, in the “public” life of the Cape, and also in the “private” decision making processes within the College. This also involves a discussion of the meaning of “records” in the SAC archive. The following three chapters locate the College spatially. The third chapter situates the College within its immediate location, indicating the ways in which the College’s boundaries shaped social relations within the space. The tradition of “racial tolerance” between English and Dutch students is then discussed in relation to the College’s promotion of this discourse at the end of the South African War, and in the lead up to the formation of Union. This discussion situates the College in its South African context. Finally, the thesis positions the College within its imperial location, through showing the ways in which those outside of the College saw the College’s role in higher education.

Using the records of Council and Senate at the College, as well as a student-run publication called the *South African College Magazine*, I have indicated ways in which the context of the SAC shaped its development. Doing so displaces the notion that institutions can be understood as having an “internal logic”, or “ethos” which is not subject to change over time. Through examining the distinctions between “public” and “private” space made at the College, the thesis shows the ways in which the boundaries between these two poles were never clear, and were subject to changes in the College’s environment. Rooting the exploration of the themes of “Englishness”, status, respectability, and reputation within a concrete material context like the SAC has indicated the ways in which writing about particular spaces can have broader relevance than simply for historians working on those particular sites during a particular period. Rather than offering a definitive history of the College during the period under study, this thesis aims to indicate the value of conducting historical research using institutional spaces as the context in which to explore theoretical issues.

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My special thanks to my supervisor, Professor Nigel Worden, for his guidance throughout the process of writing this thesis. He was constantly energetic and engaged with the project. I would also like to thank Lionel Smidt and his colleagues at the University of Cape Town Administrative Archives for helping me to navigate the archives and for allowing me access to the older documents there. The staff of the UCT Manuscripts and Archives department deserve special thanks, including Leslie Hart for pointing me in the direction of the *South African College Magazines*, and Isaac Ntabankulu for all of his help with the collections there. I would also like to mention Julia Horne, who discussed my research with me when I was in Sydney earlier this year, and recommended literature on public universities. My mother, Sally Swartz, has read and reread this thesis numerous times and has provided me with both intellectual and moral support and advice. Her work is always an inspiration to me. My friends, family, and particularly my partner, Gordon, have been supportive until the very end of this project.

## **Abbreviations:**

**SAC- South African College**

**UCGH – University of the Cape of Good Hope**

**UCT – University of Cape Town**

**CM – Council Minutes**

**SM – Senate Minutes**

**BC – Beattie Collection**

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## INTRODUCTION

A Commemoration Day speech given by Professor Ritchie, Classics professor and active member of the South African College (SAC) Senate, emphasised the uniqueness of the relationship which existed between students and the College. Ritchie stated that

Somewhere between love of home and love of country comes that influence with which we are most concerned to-day – love of College. It partakes somewhat of the warm intimate relationships of home life, while it possesses at the same time a broader outlook, which brings it into kinship with love of country. It has a charm all its own, perhaps because it comes to us at the hey-day of life, when all the world seems spread before our gaze as future scenes of conquest and achievement. It has to do with friendships, when friendships are formed easily, it has to do with the gradual realisation of our manhood and of the place we are to take in the world.<sup>1</sup>

This quotation gives a sense of the ways in which the SAC was constructing its role both in relation to its student body and wider Cape society. Situated at the intersection of “home life” and the national life of South Africa, the role of the SAC was to allow its students to achieve their potential through giving them the educational experience which would see to their transformation into men who would play a significant role in the public world at the Cape, and in South Africa.

This thesis explores the themes which are reflected in the extract above, while situating the SAC within a broader context of social and political change in South Africa. In particular, I examine the distinctions made between “public” and “private” space at the SAC, showing the ways in which knowledge constructed in the College was sometimes seen as “private”, making its students unique, while indicating the ways in which the College’s role as a “public” institution lead to it being understood as important to “public” life in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 9 (4), (1908), (Publisher unknown, held in the University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives Collection), p. 2. The publishers of the *SAC Magazines* are only listed on two issues : 1(1) of 1900 and 10(1) of 1909, which are JC Juta, Cape Town, and Sid P Cowen, Cape Town, respectively.

The South African College, which later formed the core of what became the University of Cape Town, began in 1829 as a school and College. After the opening of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1873, the College trained students to write UCGH exams.<sup>2</sup> The College system was based on the University of London model, in which one body examined students from federated Colleges. The College did not achieve formal university status until 1916, when an act was passed creating the University of Cape Town. The College was a public institution in that the majority of its funding was from the colonial government. The focus of this study is on the College rather than the school functions of the SAC. The distinction between College and school functions was made gradually, and began in 1874, when school and College buildings began to be separated. By 1900, the school and College buildings were separated completely, when the College Council ceased to act on behalf of both the College and School.<sup>3</sup>

By the 1880s, the start of the current study, the College was facing new challenges. There was a shortage of space for an increasingly large student body, and questions were raised about who the College should teach. In particular, the admission of women to the College in 1887, and later, questions about the admissions of black and coloured students required the College to remould its ethos in order to accommodate a changing student body. This involved a rethinking of the College's socio-political standing in relation to a changing South African political landscape. The South African War and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 also required the College to assess its institutional relationship to "Englishness".

This thesis begins by examining the micro-level of the formation of identities within the SAC space. This has been informed by historical approaches to masculinity and gender. Robert

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<sup>2</sup> Ritchie's two volume work on the history of the College from its inception until the creation of UCT can be consulted for an exhaustive history of the College. Ritchie, W. *The History of the South African College*, (Maskew Miller, Cape Town, 1918).

<sup>3</sup> *Report of Council of the South African College*, 1900. (G 16- 1901, Government Printers, Cape Town).

Connell argues that “schools do not simply adapt to a natural masculinity among boys or femininity among girls. They are agents in the matter, constructing particular forms of gender and negotiating relations between them.”<sup>4</sup> Although Connell’s argument here is based on life histories taken in the 1980s, it aptly describes the SAC’s invention of the ideal male student between 1880 and 1918. This was based both on a “physical” understanding of the male body, and on ideas of what it meant to be a “moral” SAC gentleman.

John Tosh’s discussion of masculinities in nineteenth century Britain has been useful in thinking about the ways in which schools inculcate certain gendered values into their students.<sup>5</sup> The work of Mrinalini Sinha on the Indian colonial context and the formation of masculine identities points to the ways in which these values were constructed in relation to colonial settings.<sup>6</sup> In the South African context, Robert Morrell’s work on masculinity and schools in colonial Natal has been a useful entry into these issues in a specifically local context. Morrell argues that two elite schools, Hilton College and Michael House, were part of an apparatus of “social engineering”, which sought to construct and reinforce a hegemonic masculinity by creating a network of men who had been educated at the school who would serve to dominate certain colonial and commercial interests.<sup>7</sup> The schools also created and perpetuated certain masculine values, which would often translate into settler values in general, as the role of white women in the construction of settler discourses was often peripheral and marginalised.<sup>8</sup> This thesis builds on this work about the uniquely South African context, showing the ways in which certain values within the College space were

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<sup>4</sup> Connell, R. W. “Cool Guys, Swots and Wimps: The Interplay of Masculinity and Education”, *Oxford Review of Education*, 15(3), (1989), pp. 291-303, 291-2.

<sup>5</sup> Tosh, J. *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (Pearson Education Limited, United Kingdom, 2005),

<sup>6</sup> Sinha, M. *Colonial Masculinity: the 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century*, (Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen: Settler Masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1880-1920*, (UNISA Press, Pretoria, 2001). The argument he is proposing here is similar to the one which Durrill is proposing in the Cape colony context, and for a higher education institution. See Durrill, W. “Shaping a settler elite: Students, Competition and Leadership at South African College, 1829 -1895”, *Journal of African History*, 41(2000), pp. 221-239.

<sup>8</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, p. 49.

valued and seen to set the male students, in particular, apart from others who had not had an SAC education. In particular, the first chapter explores and confirms Morrell's assertion that "institutions all have their own gender regime, comprising their own characteristic set of gender relations".<sup>9</sup>

The discussion of the creation of a context-specific masculinity at the SAC also draws on the concepts of status, honour and reputation in order to indicate the ways in which this "ideal" masculinity was experienced, challenged and reinforced by students. I suggest that certain kinds of behaviour were seen as fitting for those who had access to the "private" world of the College. In particular, the "performance" of these behaviours to the "public" in the Cape showed what made the SAC a distinctive space. The layers of power, hierarchies and knowledge at the College are addressed through showing how certain kinds of decisions were made in "private" and were spoken about "publicly" in particular ways.

Scholarship on the concepts of status and reputation at the Cape during the British colonial period have often focussed on the first half of the nineteenth century. Two examples of this, which have been used to understand these concepts, are Kirsten McKenzie's work on status and reputation, and Robert Ross's work which focuses on the ideas of status and respectability. McKenzie's work situates Cape Town within its imperial context, using a transnational approach to understand the concepts of honour and status.<sup>10</sup> McKenzie speaks about Sydney and Cape Town as "spaces of transience, designed for the movement of people, goods and information."<sup>11</sup> McKenzie's focus on the invention of new social boundaries and status for the colonial bourgeoisie in Cape Town and Sydney, in relation to the "wider cultural bonds of British imperialism" has been useful in thinking about the ways in which

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<sup>9</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> McKenzie, K. *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850*, (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies*, p. 1.

status concerns are constantly adapted to changing environments. Ross's work on status and respectability has been essential in understanding the idea of "respectability" and has also been used as a way of understanding the ways in which this idea was often linked to "Englishness".<sup>12</sup> However, neither of these works extends into the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, and thus, this thesis builds on these by showing the ways in which these concepts changed over time.

The concepts of "status" and "reputation" are developed in the second chapter, which provides a close analysis of the role of the Senate and Council within the SAC space. Moving from the micro-level of individual student experience of the College, this chapter examines the structure of institutional power at the College. In this discussion, the focus is on the institutional archive and the way in which it reflects power relations, and the ways in which certain knowledge was "private" within a "public" institution. Stoler's conception of the archive as a site of power and "political anxiety" has been used to uncover the ways in which the archive was thought about by those who were creating it, during Senate and Council meetings.<sup>13</sup> The first two chapters of this thesis, therefore, discuss the distinction between "public" and "private" at the individual level of students and staff, by examining appropriate gendered behaviours within the College and the distinctions which were made between "public" and "private" knowledge.

The distinction between "public" and "private" is then explored spatially in the following three chapters. These chapters rely on Lefebvre's conception of space as shaping social relations, and of social relations shaping understandings of space.<sup>14</sup> The third chapter examines the immediate location of the College, within Cape Town city, and discusses the

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<sup>12</sup> Ross, R. *Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony 1750-1870*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2009), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> See Lefebvre, H (translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith), *The Production of Space*, (Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1991).

ways in which the physical boundaries of the College shaped understandings of the space as either “public” or “private”. Moving to wider locative spaces, I then examine the College’s location within the Union of South Africa, and in the final chapter, I position the College within its imperial context.

The discussion of the College space indicates the way in which this institution should be understood as situated within multiple metaphorical, or discursive, as well as physical locations. For example, as chapter five shows, the College’s position in Cape Town shaped the way in which others understood it as a colonial institution within the British Empire. The main historiographical approach that has informed this understanding of the College is transnational history, and new imperial history in particular, which seeks to destabilise Britain as the centre of the British Empire, and think through and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. In particular, these histories mobilise the idea of networks or webs as a way of explaining the movement and mutual constitution of different national spaces. The works of Zoe Laidlaw and Alan Lester for example, have used the ideas of connections, webs and networks, to understand British imperialism.<sup>15</sup> Kerry Ward’s work about the Dutch Cape similarly places the Cape within a network of connections.<sup>16</sup> These works trace the movement of people, ideas or goods and show the ways in which phenomena are better understood not as part of an individual nations, but rather as being constituted by connections between places.

This thesis draws on this historical scholarship in order to show the way in which institutions, like nations, need to be thought, and written about, as connected to and influenced by multiple factors, both literally and metaphorically. In this sense, the SAC’s location within

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<sup>15</sup> Laidlaw, Z. *Colonial Connections, 1815 -1845: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005); Lester, A. “Imperial circuits and networks: geographies of the British Empire”, *History Compass*, 4(1), (2006), pp. 124-141.

<sup>16</sup> Ward, K. *Networks of empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009).

Cape Town, the South African Union, and the British Empire becomes a way of understanding the way it defined who the ideal student should be, and who was “part” of the College space. Spatial history has also been used in order to illuminate the ways in which the physical and social worlds are intimately linked. In particular, Richard White’s article on the importance of historians understanding nature, space, and geography has been used as a theoretical framework for the second part of the thesis.<sup>17</sup> John Eddy and Deryk Schreuder’s edited volume on colonial nationalism has been particularly useful in its examination of the ways in which particular national identities were mobilised in the context of the British Empire.<sup>18</sup> The fourth and fifth chapter of the thesis deal with the creation of specifically South African identities within the College, in relation to its national and imperial location.

#### *Histories of institutions/institutional histories*

The motivation for the writing of this thesis has been to suggest a different way of thinking about the history of institutions. The “traditional” histories of institutions, such as those which were written by Eric Walker and William Ritchie about the SAC, suggest a chronological, internal logic for institutions which negates the influence of the institution’s context on its development and vice versa.<sup>19</sup> Writing institutional histories in this way can make these works important only for scholars of that particular space. This thesis problematises the idea of this internal logic, arguing that the South African College, in the period 1880-1918, was both connected, and responding, to the context of a changing South Africa, and to its imperial ties. In particular, I show the ways in which the understanding of the role of the students of the College and of the College itself changed over time, in relation

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<sup>17</sup> White, R. “The Nationalisation of Nature”, *The Journal of American History*, 86(3), (1999), pp. 976-986.

<sup>18</sup> Eddy, J. and Schreuder, D (eds.), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*, (Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> See Walker, E. *The South African College and the University of Cape Town: written for the University centenary celebrations, 1829-1929*, (University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1929), Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*.

to a changing South Africa. In this sense, this thesis should be read as a cultural study, which examines the formation of identities within one institutional context. Similar approaches to writing about institutions, rather than writing institutional histories, could be applied in other contexts.

William Ritchie and Eric Walker have written extensive histories of the South African College. Ritchie's two-volume, nine-hundred page, history details each year in the life of the College from its inception in 1829, until the formation of the University of Cape Town in 1918.<sup>20</sup> Eric Walker's history of the College and of the University of Cape Town extends to 1929, and, while less-detailed than Ritchie's history, gives details of the major events, staffing and changes in the College over the period 1828-1929.<sup>21</sup> Although Walker does refer more to the context of South Africa in his study than Ritchie does, the history tends to focus on the College as its unit of analysis, and only mentions the context of South Africa when it directly concerned the College's functioning. These histories should be consulted for an in-depth analysis of the College's history in the period from its inception until the formation of UCT. Howard Phillips has written about the early history of the University of Cape Town, although this book takes the formation of UCT as its point of departure.<sup>22</sup>

Besides the works of Walker and Ritchie which are constructed as full histories of the SAC, there has been one other paper written with the SAC as its focus. Wayne Durrill, an American historian, wrote about the concepts of violence, class and honour at the College in the period 1829 – 1895.<sup>23</sup> This article provided some model of how a history of the SAC could be written in a way that made it more broadly applicable. This paper has been particularly useful

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<sup>20</sup> Ritchie, *The South African College*.

<sup>21</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, H. *The University of Cape Town 1918-1948: The formative years*, (University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", pp. 221-239.

in informing my analysis in the first chapter of this thesis, as it provides some background into the context of gendered behaviour at the SAC before the period under study.

### *Context*

The historical context of this study was a period of great change for South Africa. In particular, changing ideas about what it meant to be part of the British Empire shaped the way in which the SAC presented itself to the South African public. The tensions surrounding South African War lead the College to confront what it meant to be an “English” institution in a country in which ethnic tensions were increasingly present in the “public” sphere. Moreover, the formation of Union in 1910, which according to Cell, allowed for white power in South Africa became more “concentrated”, and for “imperial restraints on local initiative [to be] removed” once again challenged who the SAC should provide for, and therefore, how they thought about their “ideal” student.<sup>24</sup> Ultimately, this meant the creation of new identities in relation to a colony which was unified, but was still part of the British Empire. This brings to light ideas about uniquely “South African” identities which were being formed in this period. By showing the ways in which the localised, gendered environment of the SAC was situated within a nationalising country that was in a process of redefining itself in relation to Britain, and the unionisation of the country, I indicate the way in which what it meant to be a “South African” in this period changed over time.

The period under study has been relatively under-researched by historians of the Cape. Vivian Bickford-Smith’s book *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Colonial Cape Town* has been essential reading for this project.<sup>25</sup> Bickford-Smith examines ideas of race, respectability and Englishness in Cape Town in this period, showing the ways in which ideas about race and ethnicity were often linked and related to concepts of class. Bickford-Smith’s

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<sup>24</sup> Cell, J. *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, 1989), p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Bickford-Smith, V. *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*, (Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995).

work has been pivotal in understanding Cape Town in this period, and the ways in which power worked in the society. Saul Dubow's *A Commonwealth of Knowledge* has been used to understand the institutional context of the Cape, although Dubow's approach does not challenge the idea of what the "institution" itself represented.<sup>26</sup> These works provided a concrete framework in which the theoretical questions which this thesis addresses could be explored, as they each give a sense of Cape Town city in the period under study.

The history of education in a South African context has not been the subject of much historical research in recent years.<sup>27</sup> In particular, as Elizabeth Ludlow notes, "available texts on the history of education at the Cape largely employ an old-school empiricism fed by an assumption that the spread of schooling was the mark of progress".<sup>28</sup> The history of higher education in South Africa has also been overlooked for the period under study, partly due to the fact that there were limited higher education institutions in the period under study. The formation of universities in South Africa only formally occurred in the twentieth century, and many of the Colleges which had been teaching for degree purposes were subsumed into larger university bodies, like the University of Cape Town, which incorporated the SAC and Diocesan College.<sup>29</sup> Research from Australia and America which speaks to the idea of "public" higher education has been used for this reason, as a way of understanding how the education the SAC was providing fitted into global trends.<sup>30</sup>

### Sources

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<sup>26</sup> Dubow, S. *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2006).

<sup>27</sup> See Ludlow, EH. "State Schooling and the Cultural Construction of Teacher Identity in the Cape Colony, 1839-1865" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, February, 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Ludlow, "State Schooling", p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> The Diocesan College was incorporated in 1911, and the act which approved the founding of the University of Cape Town was passed in 1916, with UCT formally opening in 1918. See Phillips, *The University of Cape Town*, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Horne, J. and Sherington, G., "Extending the educational franchise: the social contract of Australia's public universities, 1850 -1890, *Paedagogica Historia*, 46, (1-2), pp. 207-227; Horne, J. and Sherington, G. *Sydney, the making of a public university*, (Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, forthcoming 2012); Douglass, J., *The Conditions for Admission: Access, Equity and the Social Contract of Public Universities*, (Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2007).

I have used the minutes of both the Council and the Senate meetings of the SAC from 1880-1918. These are housed in the administrative archive at the University of Cape Town. They provide a useful insight into the everyday working of the College, showing the ways in which immediate concerns about the College were addressed by those in power. They also give the reader a sense of hierarchies which were present at the College in the period under study, particularly in Senate minutes which detail disciplinary cases, which largely deal with the interaction between staff and students. These minutes tend to focus on administrative issues, and of course, are organised chronologically, rather than thematically. Thus, changes in the College, in terms of, for example, who was allowed to attend, tend to be understood as unique to the College's history, rather than as products of the social and political landscape of which the College formed a part. By supplementing my analysis with secondary literature, where it has been available, on the Cape context, I have shown some of the ways in which these issues can be seen as part of broader societal trends.

The *South African College Magazines*, were printed between 1900 and 1916, have been used in addition to the Council and Senate minutes.<sup>31</sup> The *Magazines* were produced by students, and were printed four times a year in the period under study. The articles printed in the *Magazines* are often satirical, and range from "opinion" pieces, to reprints of speeches given by the College's Debating Society. They also detail any special events that occurred at the College, such as Commemoration Days or Royal Visits. The *Magazines* have been used in order to mark both how College students saw themselves, but also how they saw the world beyond the SAC. The *Magazines* also include contributions from staff members on occasion.

Finally, I have used manuscripts from the Beattie Collection, which is also housed at the University of Cape Town. In particular, the responses to a survey on the status of higher education in South Africa, which was conducted in 1904 and 1905, have been used in the

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<sup>31</sup> Prior to this, the *South African College Union Annual* was published between 1888-1893.

final chapter, in order to indicate the way in which the College was seen by other role-players in higher education in the British Empire. Reports of the College Council have also been consulted in order to get a sense of what the College itself thought were the major events in each year, as these were presented to the colonial government.

The distinction between public space and private space has been teased out throughout the thesis, as a way of thinking about the kinds of relationships which were privileged in the College space, and the ways in which the College was understood beyond its walls. This thesis indicates the ways in which the distinction between “public” and “private” space at the SAC should be thought about both socially and spatially, as both the physical and interpersonal experiences of being insiders or outsiders contributed to the ways in which the College distinguished between the “public” and “private”. By examining the College’s location within the Cape, South Africa, and the British Empire more broadly, this thesis indicates the ways in which the institution should be seen as a product of many different historical and social forces at any point in its history.

## CHAPTER 1

### *“Good citizens and gentlemen”: Rules, reputations, morals and manliness*

This chapter focuses on the formation of gendered identities for the students of the SAC. I outline some of the ways in which the SAC students were being defined as different to other men within the Cape Colony at the time. I begin by discussing some of the ways in which the male students at the College were defined in terms of their “physical” prowess, by discussing the importance of sport within the College space. I then turn to some of the ways in which male students transgressed the norms at the College and indicate the ways in which this reflects ideas of “reputation”, status and morality within the College. This idea of “good behaviour” marked one way in which the SAC space was constructed as “private”, and in opposition to a “public” sphere of men who had not received an SAC education. Broadly, I articulate the distinctive nature of the SAC experience through the examination of a series of binaries, which were set up in the College space. The distinctions between “public” and “private”, “masculine” and “feminine” and finally, “respectable” and “rude” or “insolent” are discussed as ways of understanding the formation of gendered student identities during the period under study.

The discussion of what involved “moral” behaviour at the College points to some of the ways in which being educated at the SAC was seen by both its staff and students to provide a “mark of distinction” which set these students apart from their contemporaries in the Cape and South Africa more broadly. This distinctiveness was based on a shared body of “private” knowledge which was only available to those within the College space. In this sense, the boundary between the institution as a public space and one which was providing some kind of private knowledge is addressed. Penny Russell’s discussion of the creation of a genteel femininity in colonial Victoria is useful in thinking about the distinctions between a classed understanding of social position, and one which is based on certain kinds of behaviour which

sets the actor apart from those in her environment.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Russell argues, “Melbourne Society was dominated by standards, rituals and language which drew upon a model of gentility, and these were absorbed and adopted by the newly wealthy as legitimation for their own social position”.<sup>2</sup> What is important for the discussion of the creation of “gentlemanly” standards of behaviour at the SAC is that these behaviours were believed to be private through their being propagated inside the SAC, but were innately public in that they involved acting out one’s position within the wider Cape society.

The “standards, rituals and language” which Russell refers to in her discussion of Melbourne Society are similar to what was being inculcated within the SAC as “marks of distinction” between those who had an SAC education and those who did not. This understanding was not solely based on class, as by the 1880s, there were increasing numbers of students at the College who were either the first generation to receive higher education, or who were there on scholarships which were based on financial need. There were multiple scholarships which young men and women could apply for, which meant that many people who would not have been able to afford College fees earlier in the nineteenth century were afforded access to the College space.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the group of “gentlemen” under study is not one which was uniformly drawn from the middle-class, or even from the English-speaking middle-class. Indeed, the lack of uniformity amongst the student body, both in terms of class and in terms of their English and Dutch backgrounds made it all the more important to provide the students with an education which would instil in the students shared moral codes and norms.

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<sup>1</sup> Russell, P. *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity*, (Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> One of the aims of the Rhodes scholarship, started in 1902, was that it would allow people of all classes to study abroad. One Rhodes scholarship was reserved for male students from the SAC. See, for example, Ziegler, P. *Legacy: Cecil Rhodes, the Rhodes Trust and Rhodes Scholarships*, (Yale University Press, Norfolk, 2008), on the Rhodes scholarships. Other scholarships which were reserved for students from poorer backgrounds included Murray scholarships, which were reserved for the “less affluent portion of the Colonists, and the sons of descendants of the old Dutch Settlers are to have a preference”, as well as Union and Boarding scholarships. See *Calendar of the South African College and the South African College School for the year 1896-7*, (ER Morris and Co, Cape Town, 1896).

I will work with Durrill's assertion that "the point of an education at the South African College was not to produce finished scholars, but rather to give students the marks of distinction that set them apart from their inferiors in the Cape".<sup>4</sup> Durrill's thesis is that both informal competition like "violence", "attack[ing] professors and townspeople in Cape Town", stealing and vandalising property, in the first half of the nineteenth century, and formal competition, like sport and debating, in the second half of the century, were used by students to secure their reputations.<sup>5</sup> These forms of competition, he argues, lead to the formation of an elite, and a body of leaders within this elite, who had excelled in these competitions during their time at the College, and later went on to hold prominent positions as Cape merchants and in government.<sup>6</sup>

My research has shown that perhaps the idea of producing gentlemen with the "marks of distinction" was more complicated than Durrill suggested, as this was made possible through a number of avenues, besides formal or informal competition. In particular, the intervention of professors in these competitions, and in social interactions with students, bound students into relationships in which respect for authority was a key way in which they could protect their own reputations. Thus, my research builds on this earlier study by Durrill, showing the ways in which the male students defined themselves, both as SAC scholars and as (white) men in the Cape. Through an examination of the way in which students reacted to the rules and regulations which were put in place at the College, and to figures who were enforcing discipline at the College, the "distinction" which the College was seeking to provide for its students from the rest of society at the Cape and in South Africa at large is illuminated.<sup>7</sup>

### *Manly and rugged men*

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<sup>4</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p. 239.

<sup>7</sup> Also absent from Durrill's analysis is the inclusion of women in the College space from the late 1880s, which I will discuss below. While it falls at the end of Durrill's period of interest, the inclusion of women in the College space did mean a rethinking of what it meant to be a man in the SAC space.

The “ideal” student at the SAC was thought about in gendered terms during the period under study. In spite of the fact that women had been admitted to the College in 1887, the way in which SAC students were spoken about both by the official bodies at the College and by the *SAC Magazine* was still in terms of them being men. The movement of women into the public sphere in this period, as they moved from performing domestic, “private” roles in the Cape colony to being members of a public institution like the SAC, meant a redefinition of what it meant to be a man in the SAC space, in relation to female students and teachers, who were increasingly “publicly” present.

The “respectability” of the male students at the College was defined in terms of their gentlemanly status. Ross’s work on the concepts of “respectability” and “status” has been useful in thinking about the historical location of these terms in the Cape colony. Ross argues that “respectability was the outward manifestation of a specific class ideology. Because it was so successful it came to be seen widely as part of the natural order of things.”<sup>8</sup> Further, Ross shows that the ideas of both respectability and gentility, as they became part of the “invisible” English “natural order” were “ideals to which all could aspire”.<sup>9</sup> These values were seen as a benchmark for how the students at the College should behave, and encompassed sets of behaviours, which were outward markers of status and education which would inculcate the correct values into the students.

The discussion of men at the SAC carving out a “distinct” reputation for themselves both within the College and in the wider Cape society necessitates a discussion of how the ideal “man” at the SAC was thought about. There are two examples which will be used to indicate the ways in which the SAC men were being defined. The first is about the idealisation of sport, physicality and teamwork in the SAC space and the second is about the decisions that

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<sup>8</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 93.

were made about the Rhodes Scholarships, which were awarded to male students at the SAC.<sup>10</sup> Both of these examples indicate the ways in which SAC men were being defined in terms of both ruggedness and gentlemanly behaviour. It was this combination, of the distinctive SAC education, and the space in which their physical prowess could be fostered, that set them apart from others in Cape, and South African, society.

Involvement in sport had two functions at the SAC. Firstly, sport was used as a way of the SAC defining its reputation to those outside its walls. When the College students excelled in sports, the reputation of the College itself was bolstered. Secondly, sport was used as a way of certain individuals within the College marking themselves as “distinct” from others, as they excelled in sports. So central was sport to life at the College that students were given days off from work in order to support the College teams. These days were known as “cricket holidays”.<sup>11</sup> The *SAC Magazines* printed lengthy articles about students who had excelled in sports matches, listing the players by name. For example, the discussion of a cricket match between the College and another local College, Bishops, or the Diocesan College, in the *Magazine* reads “Melle also deserves further congratulations on gaining the coveted century against Bishops. His efforts gallantly backed by Lundie succeeded in gaining College another splendid victory”.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, Melle is constructed as a hero, and the ideal of team work is prized above individual prowess, as Lundie “backed” Melle. Similar articles were rarely, if ever, printed about the academic achievements of students. Each issue of the *SAC Magazine* included a detailed record of each sports match which had been played, presented either in narrative or tabular form. In this sense, the values and “heroism” associated with sports were prized as making the ideal man.

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<sup>10</sup> Although this would be an interesting avenue for future research, especially based on the SAC’s imperial location, and Rhodes’ personal ties to South Africa.

<sup>11</sup> See Senate minutes (SM), 3 March 1909.

<sup>12</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 10 (1), (1909), p. 23.

The interaction between social norms and the physical site of the male body was used as a way of defining what made the SAC man different. As Connell has shown in his discussion of masculinities, the body should not be understood as neutral, but as an agent of action, able to do certain things and not others, and being “*substantively* in play in social practices...”<sup>13</sup> Further, Connell’s work destabilises the idea of a “fixed, true masculinity”.<sup>14</sup> Connell touches on the idea of the physicality of male bodies and that “true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men’s bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body.”<sup>15</sup> While the SAC space was one which favoured a particular ideal of what it meant to be a man, these qualities were seen to be emanating naturally from the men themselves, rather than being products of a particular historical moment.

The SAC was in a process of constructing a particular kind of student who reflected the values, morals and respectability of the College. The kind of ideal “man” and student at the College was contextual: it was based on the SAC’s location and on a particular understanding of what it meant to be a “good” man in the period under study. According to Tosh, in late-Victorian Britain, school was seen as an “initiation into manhood”, through the promotion of “team games and physical toughness at the expense of intellectual and moral growth.”<sup>16</sup> Tosh goes on to argue that in these public schools, hierarchies were based on seniority, and muscular might. These hierarchies had as much to do with the ways in which men treated each other as they did with the ways in which women were treated by men. Morrell argues that in the case of sporting in Natal, and of playing rugby in particular, “the emphasis on tough bodies had the effect, also, of preserving certain spaces as exclusively male”.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, sport, in Morrell’s thesis, is “the site in which certain masculine values are

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<sup>13</sup> Connell, RW. *Masculinities*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995), p. 58.

<sup>14</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 45

<sup>15</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 45

<sup>16</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, p. 79

created, understood, disseminated, perpetuated, challenged”.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the SAC, women were marginalised in these College sporting events. In this sense, sporting events constructed the relationship between the SAC and the public world as a male enterprise, as the team represented the College.

The social space created by sports matches legitimated certain kinds of gendered behaviours for women. While the role of women in sports was marginalised at the SAC during this period, as it was only recently that they had been included in the College and their numbers were still relatively small, their role as supporters was emphasised in the *SAC Magazine*. In fact, most cases in which women are mentioned in connection with sport at the College refer to the fact that they were doing either a good or a bad job of supporting the male sportsmen.<sup>19</sup> One example of the role of women in supporting the men’s sporting achievements was given in an article in the *Magazine* that detailed “A College Lady’s Impression of her first football match”.<sup>20</sup> In this article the woman comments on the way in which football matches and the etiquette surrounding them was unfamiliar, saying that after she noticed everyone yelling to support the SAC team, “So I thought, “this is evidently the correct thing,” and *I* was just starting to yell too, when I saw the other girls were clapping instead. So I began clapping too. I wish we could yell, it would be more exciting.”<sup>21</sup> If gender is to be understood relationally, the emergence of this rugged masculinity at the SAC also legitimated certain ways of being feminine in this space.

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<sup>18</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> For example, one article praised the SAC women students for organising a Fancy Fair as a fundraiser for developing the sports grounds: “The ladies connected with the College have also not been behindhand in doing their share towards helping the institution, which as shelter their fathers, their husbands, their sons, perhaps even their daughters beneath her walls. Under their auspices, a third Fancy Fair will be held in the College Grounds some time November next. That it will be a success is assured by the energetic way in which the ladies of the Peninsula are taking it up” (*SAC Magazine*, 3(1), (1903), p. 2); for treating visiting sportsmen too well: “The ladies have novel ideas about Cricket. They actually treat opposing teams as their “guests”. What is going to become of sport? Seriously, however, we would remind them that it is usual to ask the Cricket Committee for the use of Club materials, before, not after using them.” (*SAC Magazine*, 10(1), (1909), p.9).

<sup>20</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4(2), (1904), p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4(2), (1904), p.12.

The SAC men represented the College, and the women were supporting the men who could easily move from the private and distinctive world of the SAC to the public world, in which their sports matches served to reinforce the reputation of the College as a whole. Bickford-Smith argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Cape Colony, “women’s work” was defined by them being in “supportive, if not always directly subordinate, roles to men”.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the contextual nature of gender roles at the SAC is highlighted, as the roles that were being produced and prided were as much about an internal set of values for the College as they were about broader societal norms about how men and women should behave. Keegan argues that in the period around the formation of Union in 1910, white men’s sense of their own masculinity in this period was deeply tied to their protection of the honour of white women.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the idea that men should be “respectable” in this context was based on their status both as white men and on their treatment of white women.

The second example which indicates the kinds of qualities which the ideal SAC man was to have is the selection of Rhodes Scholars. Rhodes had stipulated that one of his scholarships should be awarded to a man from the SAC as the school “provided a normative context, in the mind of Rhodes, Michell, and Hawksley, for the language and intent of the will’s selection criteria”.<sup>24</sup> In a Senate meeting in 1911, the suitability of applicants for the scholarship was discussed. Masculinity was a defining criterion for the award rather than academic skill.<sup>25</sup> The applicants were judged according to the following criteria, which had

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<sup>22</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Keegan, T., “Gender, degeneration, and sexual danger: Imagining race and class in South Africa, ca. 1912”, *Journal of Southern African History*, 27(3), (2001), pp. 459-477, p. 460.

<sup>24</sup> Nutall, T., “A Century of South African Rhodes Scholarships”, in A. Kenny (ed) *The History of the Rhodes Trust*, p.258. Hawksley and Michell were the administrators of Rhodes’ will (Michell) and of the scholarships (Hawksley) after Rhodes’ death.

<sup>25</sup> Of course, this was based on the regulations which were set up in Rhodes’ will. However, this still warrants discussion, as the way in which the applicants are described in the Senate meeting indicate compliance with Rhodes’ criteria. It is also interesting that the Scholarship was left to male students at the College in spite of the fact that women had been admitted to the College over a decade earlier. While Rhodes did leave the scholarship

been set out in Rhodes' will: "literary and scholastic attainments (with the percentage in exams), success in sport (ranking in sport based on a school vote), qualities of leadership and manhood, moral character (force of character)."<sup>26</sup>

The Senate considered the candidates on the aforementioned criteria, taking note of the votes that had been cast by their peers. The frontrunner in the competition for the Scholarship was a student called Wiley, who had scored the lowest out of all the applicants in his matriculation exams, obtaining only forty-three percent. In terms of character, the Senate concluded that he "stands head and shoulders above the others. He is manly, steady, and at all times reliable."<sup>27</sup>

The Senate went on to state that Wiley was not only "manly" and "reliable" but also came out at the top of the vote of his peers on the qualities of "manhood", "leadership" and sporting ability.<sup>28</sup> Wiley's poor performance in his examinations seems not to have hampered his favour with the Senate.

Another student who applied for the scholarship was described as "vigorous and reliable; full of go-ahead-ness; but is somewhat aggressive in manner" (a student called Platnaeur, who was ranked second in terms of character by the Senate). A lower ranking student, Caporn, who had excelled in his examinations, but had been ranked poorly by his peers on the scales of "manhood", "leadership" and sporting ability and was described as "also a very nice boy, but a mere book worm. Much too self-centred. Lives in a world of his own." Others were simply described as "vain" or "erratic".<sup>29</sup> By the time that the decision was made about the award of the scholarship, Wiley had failed his exams and was excluded from receiving the

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to the school rather than the College, it was later decided that it should be given to an older student who attended the College.

<sup>26</sup> SM, 2 Dec 1911.

<sup>27</sup> SM, 2 Dec 1911.

<sup>28</sup> According to Ziegler, the poor academic performance of South African students at Oxford came to be well known. Parkin, administrator of the scholarships from 1902, claimed in 1913 that Rhodes scholars from South Africa were "poorly prepared", and explained, rather interestingly, that this was because they were reliant on the labour of black South Africans. Ziegler, *Legacy*, p. 78. Nutall quotes Parkin, who stated that "the stimulating air of the high veldt and plateau country tends to nervous exhaustion" and their "reliance on black people meant that they were ill-prepared for Oxford". See Nutall, "A Century of South African Rhodes Scholarships", p. 260.

<sup>29</sup> SM, 2 Dec 1911.

scholarship. Platnauer, in spite of his aggression, was awarded the scholarship, over Caporn, who had once again come out on the top of his class in the examinations.

The equation of Caporn's bookish nature with self-centred behaviour is indicative of a certain idea about what it meant to be a man at the SAC in this period. According to Mangan, the mid-nineteenth century saw an ideal of "muscular [Christianity]" emerging in which public school boys were supposed to appear "manly" and "moral" at all times.<sup>30</sup> In neglecting to interact with his peers, and taking little interest in sport, Caporn's masculinity was called into question. The bookishness, which conflicted with Rhodes' ideal of selecting young men who were not "merely bookworms", would have been conceived of as effeminate and associated with domestic life. According to Tosh, in the late nineteenth century in Britain, there was amongst upper and middle class men a "rejection of domesticity".<sup>31</sup> The idea of male self-sufficiency and independence from the constraints of domestic life was often projected onto colonial settings, which were associated with freedom from metropolitan restrictions. In nineteenth century Britain, "to be a man was to be somebody, a public person, while the essence of middle-class femininity was being constructed as private and domestic".<sup>32</sup> Something similar was occurring within the SAC, as the College sought to provide their students with the "distinction" which would allow them to excel in public life in South Africa. Caporn's reading and spending time alone, or neglecting to engage with group sports, meant that he was challenging the ideal, hegemonic masculinity which was being espoused at the SAC in this period. The link between Rhodes' own idealisation of his colonial experiences and his idea of what it meant to be a "good" man is made clear in the criteria he set out for the Rhodes scholarships. Rhodes himself was an "undistinguished student at

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<sup>30</sup> Mangan, J. "Social Darwinism and upper-class Education in late Victorian and Edwardian England". In J. Mangan and J Walvin (eds.) *Manliness and Morality in Nineteenth Century Britain and America 1840 -1900*, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995). pp. 135-159, p. 137-138.

<sup>31</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, C. *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992), p. 17.

Oxford”, but had made his reputation by espousing the characteristics that the scholarship scheme awarded in his life once he had left Oxford.<sup>33</sup>

The failure of Caporn to put physical toughness and team games ahead of his own intellectual pursuits is indicative of the way in which the physical was, in this period, often emphasised at “the expense of intellectual and moral growth”.<sup>34</sup> Part of the point of creating an environment in which sporting ability was encouraged and built into everyday life – like the cricket holidays – was that the “manly” aggression, which was much prized, would be channelled into legitimate forms of competition. The votes of the peers of the students who applied for the Rhodes scholarships indicate that while manliness was important as some sort of “objective” measure imposed by the Council, it was also a quality which could be acted out with one’s (male) peers.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the distinctiveness, which the SAC was hoping to instil in their students, was one that was based on an understanding of men as being both physically strong and respectable. The following discussion comments on the hierarchical environment of the College, showing the ways in which this distinctiveness encompassed a set of morals and ideas about appropriate behaviour for College students.

### *Discipline and reputation*

The Rules of the SAC, published in 1896 in the second issue of the *SAC Calendar*, and amended or reaffirmed each year by members of the Senate included the following: “Students found guilty of any offense against good morals will be expelled or otherwise punished, at the discretion of the Senate.”<sup>36</sup> This rule draws on the idea that there was a shared body of knowledge amongst staff and students at the College about what constituted “good morals”

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<sup>33</sup> Maylam, P. *The Cult of Rhodes: Remembering an Imperialist in Africa*, (David Philip, Cape Town, 2005), p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p.11.

<sup>35</sup> Tosh describes a similar process in public schools in England, where manliness was measured according to the way in which boys treated each other with a certain degree of “roughness”. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 113.

<sup>36</sup> Rules of the SAC as printed in *SAC Calendar for 1896-7*.

and what would have been seen as a transgression of these moral norms. This rule provides a useful prompt into thinking about what was “normal” and “moral” behaviour at the SAC, a secular, public and government-funded institution. In exploring what these “offenses against good morals” were, the kinds of behaviour which was deemed “proper” and “moral” is illuminated. Once again, the idea of “good” morals sets up a binary between what constitutes “good” morals and what constitutes “bad” morals, which was often likened to what constituted respectable behaviour in opposition to what constituted vulgar or not-respectable behaviour.

In 1881, a disciplinary case was brought to the Senate of the SAC. Rice, a student in Professor Gill’s Classics class, was brought before the Senate as he had treated Professor Gill with disrespect. In his *History of the SAC*, Ritchie describes Gill, saying that as he had “a good share of our ancestral fighting spirit, frequent conflicts were inevitable.”<sup>37</sup> Although Ritchie is in this case talking about conflict between Gill and the principal of the College school about where Gill’s classes would be held, the fact that Gill is described as having “fighting spirit” is significant in the analysis of this case. In this case, Rice called into question a professor’s right to monitor his attendance at College classes.<sup>38</sup> Until this point, regular attendance at lectures was compulsory, and unless students had given professors notice that they were ill or had relevant excuses from their parents, being absent from class was a punishable offence. The distinction between the College and the school becomes apparent in this discussion, as does the role of the school in performing a parental role for the students.

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<sup>37</sup> Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 226. One can assume that the “ancestral” here refers to his being of Scottish origins.

<sup>38</sup> Durrill has also analysed this case in terms of competition and violence. See Durrill, “Shaping a settler elite”, p. 236.

Rice had been both inadequately prepared for his work in class and had absented himself from class without permission on a few occasions. When Professor Gill asked Rice about his reasons for these misdemeanours, Rice had replied that

he considered himself at liberty (as a B.A. student) to do what work he wished, to attend class or not as he chose, and in either case without offering excuse, that a Professor had no right to know, much less to demand any reasons for this or that conduct.<sup>39</sup>

Gill, obviously insulted by the lack of respect for his authority, asked Rice for a written apology the following week, which Rice refused to give. Rice then decided to report the case to Senate, stating that Gill had used harsh language against him. A month later, Rice apologised to Gill in a letter, which Gill regarded as “unsatisfactory in itself”, as the letter had been marked “private”, which Gill perceived as a “deliberate insult”.<sup>40</sup> Gill then read the letter to the entire class, and asked if any of them agreed with what Rice had said in the letter, which no one did publicly. It seems that Gill was asking whether the class agreed with the contents of the apology letter which Rice had written, rather than the act of apologising, as Gill stated in the Senate meeting that he had invited the class to suggest any other likely interpretations of what Rice’s apology could have meant.<sup>41</sup> The interesting thing about this case was that the desire for the apology to be made publically was seen as of great importance to Gill. Much less important than having a letter addressed to him, in which Rice’s apology was spelled out, was Gill’s sense that an apology should be made in front of the class, such that they were all aware that Gill’s reputation was not at stake, but rather that Rice had reacted dishonourably.

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<sup>39</sup> SM, 27 May 1881.

<sup>40</sup> SM, 13 June 1881.

<sup>41</sup> SM, 13 June 1881.

When Gill reported the matter to Senate, they urged him to accept Rice's apology, which Gill did.<sup>42</sup> However, Rice was clearly dissatisfied with the result and he told Gill that he would go above his head to the Council for his issues to be considered.<sup>43</sup> It seems that Rice did not ever take the matter up with the Council, and Gill reported not having seen him in his class since the incident. As Durrill has noted, this case is interesting in that it called into question the role of the Senate in the personal lives of the students.<sup>44</sup> This case did not result in any direct changes, and cases of poor attendance in class are reported in Senate minutes until 1918.

The students at the SAC needed to protect their reputations in front of their peers. Asking Rice to apologise in front of his peers would have called his reputation into question. Further, Rice's public apology would have worked to restore Gill's own reputation. Another attribute of the College gentleman was his respect for and obedience to authority. While he was in a place of higher education, it was still important for him to respect the age and education of his professors, and not call their authority into question. This is reflected in the *SAC Magazines*, after the printing of a series of profiles on the College professors. The profiles, which included basic biographical data and educational backgrounds and interests of the professors, were discontinued by the student editors of the magazines "as they think that such sketches serve no useful end and cannot but be distasteful to the Professors themselves".<sup>45</sup> The sketches were not satirical in any sense, and thus one can deduce that part of the respectability attached to being a College student meant a real separation of what it meant to be a staff member and a student. By removing these profiles from a publication that was run by students, and included many satirical and informal articles and poems, the students acknowledged the status and authority of their professors.

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<sup>42</sup> One can only guess that the Senate's awareness of Gill's "fighting spirit" had something to do with him being urged to drop the case and accept the apology.

<sup>43</sup> SM, 27 June 1881.

<sup>44</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p. 236.

<sup>45</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2 (2), (1902), p.1

Another important question which this case raised was about College professors standing in *loco parentis*. Importantly, the complete split between school and College facilities only occurred in the last years of the nineteenth century, and Council acted on behalf of both College and school until 1900.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the difference between College students and school students was one which was not initially defined in terms of administrative differences but rather in terms of difference in syllabus. The important thing to remember is that the age range for students at the College varied widely, from about sixteen, to a “gentleman of ripe years”.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, Rice’s strong reaction about the role of the College in seeing to it that he completed his work was also about Rice’s own understanding of what it meant to be an adult and a student as distinct from a school-goer. Rice was actively pushing against the role of parents and professors in his personal affairs, arguing that they had no business controlling his use of his time.

The rules of the SAC were clear on the role of the College in the life of students when they were away from home. Two of the initial fourteen rules which were printed in the first *SAC Calendar* dealt with the College’s role in the parenting of students. The first rule, as discussed above, was that “any student absent from a Class, without permission, must produce, at the earliest opportunity, a written explanation of the cause of his absence, signed by his parent, or by the person in *loco parentis*”.<sup>48</sup> In this sense, the idea of being at the SAC was not defined by being independent, but rather, was based on the permission and access which was granted by one’s parents. Part of this would have been about the young age of many of the SAC students, with the age minimum for the second matriculation examination being just fourteen years.<sup>49</sup> The second rule pertaining to the role of parents and guardians in

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<sup>46</sup> *Report of the SAC Council 1896, 1900*, (G 29 – ’97; G16 – 1901).

<sup>47</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1887*, (G. 23 – ‘88).

<sup>48</sup> Rules of the SAC, *SAC Calendar, 1896/7*.

<sup>49</sup> *SAC Calendar, 1896/7*.

the education of their children at the SAC had to do with students *proving* that their parents had approved of their accommodation arrangements at the SAC.<sup>50</sup>

These rules should not, however, paint a picture of excessive parental involvement in the lives of the SAC students. While most of the administrative matters of College life – such as the payment of fees, award of scholarships, negotiations about some disciplinary matters – were dealt with through letters written to the College by parents, it seems that the honourable students of the SAC saw to it that their own reputations would be maintained through dealing with their interpersonal affairs themselves. The case of Rice provides a good example of this – his parents were never involved in this disciplinary case, and it was his feeling that his parents *should not* be involved which sparked the disagreement between him and Gill initially. While Rice saw the interference of the Professors as an annoyance and an infringement, he was also aware of the protection of his reputation. His writing “private” on the apology letter to Gill can be read in two possible ways. Firstly, it could be seen as an insult, in which Rice made this a matter between himself and Gill only, and refused to reinforce Gill’s authority in front of his peers. The second, and what I think is more likely, is that Rice wanted to protect his own reputation in front of his peers, and thus wanted to keep the matter as quiet as possible, as he was aware of the “deeply hierarchical environment” in which he was trying to “stand up” for himself.

The *Magazines* reflect this concern with the protection of the reputations of individual students, and thus, the reputation of the school. They largely speak to a certain idea of masculinity at the College which differentiated the “good morals” of the SAC men from other men in the Cape. For example, one issue of the magazine included a satirical anecdote about a woman being left in the rain alone in the city of Cape Town, without a male chaperone. The story tells us that she had come from the country to spend the June holidays with her Aunt,

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<sup>50</sup> *SAC Calendar, 1896/7.*

and could not find her way to her Aunt's home. The SAC student "gallantly offered to see her home" (all too happily it seems, as he was fond of the "lady's society"). The woman "gave herself for safe-keeping, into the hands of our student", saying, "I never would have spoken to you or allowed you to take me home if I had not seen the South African College colours on your hat. I know I will come to no harm at your hands, for the Students of the College are *all gentlemen*".<sup>51</sup> The woman, here, is constructed as helpless in comparison to the independent and self-sufficient College gentleman.

This anecdote, whether based on fact or not, provides a useful insight into the importance of the reputation of the College for the students. Indeed, this story was printed in an article pointing out how important it was to maintain one's reputation. It is significant that the article points to the importance of the male students' reputations being connected to their treatment of women. The article states that the social behaviour of the College students often leaves much to be desired, but that "our reputation for true manliness ranks very high in the opinion of the South African public".<sup>52</sup> In this sense, the masculinity which the College men were required to display, or their "true manliness" was one in which they could care for women, and uphold the status and reputation of the College at all times. It also involved a degree of independence, as the students who were walking around in Cape Town, wearing College colours, were acting as individual representatives of the institution with which they were affiliated. The "private" world of the College in which the students were receiving the education which would set them apart from contemporaries at the Cape was intimately linked to the "public" world, in which this distinction could be acted out.

When the *SAC Magazine* was started in 1900, a Senate meeting met to discuss the ways it could ensure that the magazine best represented the student body at the College. It was

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<sup>51</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(3), (1901), p. 59

<sup>52</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(3), (1901), p. 59.

resolved that “the best safeguard would be to insist that the editor or editors should be bona-fide present students of the College and that this should be indicated in the publication”.<sup>53</sup>

The understanding of the Senate was that those (male) students who were educated at the SAC would understand and honour the tradition of respectable behaviour. While the male students were allowed to use “humour” and “satire” to express their concerns about the feminisation of the SAC, for example, these needed to be exercised with restraint, as the following example shows.

The male students were aware of the way in which their reputations were being defined in their interactions with female students who were admitted to the College in 1887. The *SAC Magazines*, through “humour” and “satire” questioned the admission of women in the SAC, and their role within higher education spaces.<sup>54</sup> In March 1901, the *SAC Magazine* printed an article entitled “For Undergraduates who do not know”, which satirically questioned the presence of women in the College space, saying that they showed a “disinclination for work” and “disrespect for Professors and other animals” amongst other “ills to which girl students are heir”. The article suggested a removal from the academic space, prescribing “no work” and “confiscation of writing material”.<sup>55</sup> The article positions women students as not “respectable” as they show a “quarrelsome disposition” and are unable to express the appropriate behaviour within the College space.

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<sup>53</sup> SM, 27 Nov 1900.

<sup>54</sup> The use of satire in student magazines is discussed by Carol Dyhouse in her examination of women’s admission into higher education institutions in Britain. She argues that “attitudes in student magazines around the time of women’s admission [in the UK, starting from about 1870] tended to be characterised by a tone of satire or nervous ridicule.” (Dyhouse, C. *No Distinction of Sex?: Women in British universities, 1870-1939*, (UCL Press, London, 1995), p.197). It is the “nervous” part of this statement which is most important. While it is likely that many of the students held openly misogynist or patriarchal beliefs, the women posed a challenge to a social space which had been, and continued to be, defined in gendered terms. For women to enter that space meant a redefinition of what it meant to be a student at the SAC, and a revisiting of gendered relations in relation to women, rather than in homosocial terms.

<sup>55</sup> “Ils to which girl students are heir”, *South African College Magazine*, 1(2), (1901), p. 44. This article is introduced by the claim that “It does not look quite proper for an undergraduate to wear a gown with either a straw-hat or knickers.”

Most importantly for the present discussion of discipline and reputation at the College, however, was that in the following issue of the *Magazine*, the editors printed a retraction of the article. It is unclear who called for the apology to be printed, but it seems that it was either a woman student, or a man acting on behalf of the honour of the women, which seems a more likely scenario, given the notable absence of real women's opinion in the pages of the *SAC Magazine*.<sup>56</sup> Dyhouse argues that women's responses to men's jibes in magazines and satirical articles were often silenced by fears of appearing "unfeminine" and in spaces where women were quite clearly being constructed as a threatening, dangerous or unwanted "other", they often responded by keeping a "low profile" in order to avoid more ridicule and unwanted attention.<sup>57</sup> The apology which is printed makes clear the way in which women were seen as taking the social space which belonged to men, and challenging the patriarchal mould which the SAC had been forging before, and during, this period. The apology pointed out that women students were actually performing better than men in all of the exams, and that "in return for it all we accused them of laziness".<sup>58</sup> The awareness of women matching or exceeding the ability of men in the classroom and the need to write an article denying this indicates the way in which educated women were seen as a challenge, and a danger.

Included in the apology is the phrase "our chivalry has been called in question". This clearly shows the way in which gentlemanly status at the SAC was defined in relation to the

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<sup>56</sup> Very few articles in the *SAC Magazine* were written by women, and those which were, were often about the women being women, rather than about other matters which were affecting College life. For example, the article entitled "A College Lady's impression of her first football match" spoke about appropriate gendered behaviour for women when watching men play sports. See *SAC Magazine*, 4(2), (1904), p. 12. Other examples include letters being reported including one between a woman and her friend who was studying at Newnham College (which the *SAC Magazine* had identified as being part of Cantabury) (*SAC Magazine*, 9(1), (1908), p. 7). The article also states that "It is positively appalling to see the number of unmarried women living in this country with no special occupation or interest in life, absolutely *nothing to do* except pay calls and play tennis and hockey." In the case of the printed apology in the *SAC Magazine* above, it is possible, too, that the retraction was requested by the College staff, although no evidence directly supports this possibility.

<sup>57</sup> Dyhouse, C. *No distinction of sex?*, p. 199.

<sup>58</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(3), (1901), p. 48.

treatment of women at the College. Lying in the SAC publication and denying the ability of women to perform academically, even though it was a common thread throughout the period that the *SAC Magazine* was printed, would have called into question their ability to differentiate themselves from “other” men, and challenged their status as SAC gentlemen. The importance of recording the apology in print form also points to the fact that the apology needed to be made publicly for it to have real meaning, rather than privately to the person who had called the authors’ “chivalry into question.” This example also points to the fact that reputations were called into question in relation to less formal disciplinary cases, like this one, which was not directly dealt with by the College Senate.

The desire for College students to behave as true gentlemen comes up numerous times in the *College Magazines*. Part of this meant treating women in certain ways, but it also involved conforming to certain levels of etiquette which would display their “cultured” status and honour to the wider Cape society. Durrill’s argument about the SAC’s mission being to instil “marks of distinction” on its students holds true when read from the perspective of the students themselves. The *Magazines* reflect the students’ belief that their education was marking them as different from other men within the Cape, and that they possessed certain qualities which they owed to their education.

The Reverend Bender, a Jewish minister who had been giving Bible classes at the College, in an address to the Debating Society, clearly laid out what it meant to be a gentleman of the SAC.<sup>59</sup> Pointing out the importance of the College in Cape society, Bender described the ways in which College gentlemen were expected to interact with the society at large. College

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<sup>59</sup> For a brief biographical account of Bender and his training at Columbia and later in Vienna see Mendelsohn, R. and Shain, M. *The Jews in South Africa*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, Johannesburg, 2008), p. 94-5. It is worth mentioning here that Bender was speaking about the idea of “respectability”, self-sufficiency and the role of the SAC (male) students in society at precisely the same time that these questions were being asked of the Jewish community in the Cape. Bender was not himself a Rabbi, but was a minister in the Jewish faith and was head of the Cape Town Synagogue for forty years. He was also well-known in South Africa as a philanthropist. See Bentwich, N. “Jewish life in South Africa”, *Jewish Studies*, 4(1), (1942), pp. 73-84, p. 76. *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 8.

gentlemen needed to show selflessness and restraint under all circumstances. This meant both that the students would “feel irresistibly that you have each an individuality to cultivate and to develop”, but that this individuality needed to be channelled towards the “advancement of the human race” and in particular, to “those who are bent on gratifying their sordid and sensual cravings to the fullest possible extent, regardless of consequences”. Being a student at the SAC, according to Bender,

shows that you do not belong to the ubiquitous nondescript, useless class of people that Cecil Rhodes has aptly designated as loafers; that is, those who are content to go through life without affording the slightest evidence of any definite aim or purpose; without lending a serious thought to others.<sup>60</sup>

According to Bender, part of what the training at the SAC would inculcate in the College students was a distinctiveness which would lead them to truly care about others, while always being self-sufficient. These were not people without “purpose”, but were those who had been given the distinction of the education at the SAC, which would allow them to make meaningful contributions to Cape society. They were in the words of the Chairman of the Council to be “good citizens and gentlemen in the truest and best sense of the word”.<sup>61</sup> The distinction here between those respectable gentlemen, who could contribute to society, and rude, selfish men who could not was important here.

#### *Uniform reputation: the public and the private at the SAC*

The disciplinary case involving Rice and Gill is indicative of the manner in which some College students were seeking to protect their reputations. It also gives some insight into the way in which the SAC education was seen to set the students apart from others within the Cape. The educational experience which the students at the College were receiving was seen to give them some “intangible” education as well, which was not about gaining a higher

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<sup>60</sup> Speech by Rev Bender to the SAC Debating society, reprinted in the *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 3.

education qualification. Rather, this education constituted a body of private knowledge which, when understood and acted out, showed that the SAC gentlemen were men of certain status and reputation. What was learned inside the College constituted a body of “private” knowledge. The boundary between the “public” and the “private” world at the SAC was, therefore, one which needed to be protected, such that the distinctiveness of the College education was maintained.

In certain cases, the clothing and behaviour of male students were used as a way of expressing the distinction between public and private space at the College. These included the wearing of College colours and smoking in the SAC premises. These cases show the ways in which the individual students at the College were subject to some sort of institutional power which acted on their physical bodies as much as the educational power which was acting on and being acted out mentally. In this discussion, I show some of the ways in which ideas about “proper” behaviour and clothing was a matter of the concern for the College. This discussion points to the fact that the understanding of the institution as a bounded entity does not adequately address the role of students as “agents” of the institution – as messengers and the protectors of the College’s reputation in the Cape Colony. Thus, the reputation of individual students at the College was linked to the reputation of the College as a whole – if the students were not seen to possess the “distinction” which they were supposed to after being educated at the SAC, this would bring the reputation of the institution into question.

The first way in which status was marked at the College was through the wearing of academic dress for Undergraduates during College hours. In the first College *Calendar* printed by the SAC, the rules for 1895 and 1896 appeared, and included a clause about dress, which stated that academic dress was to be worn during College hours.<sup>62</sup> In fact, this rule appears in each *Calendar* until 1915, when it was taken out of the rules of the SAC. What is

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<sup>62</sup> SAC *Calendar for 1895/6*, (“Cape Times” Printing Works, Cape Town, 1895).

interesting about this rule is that the wearing of academic dress would have been an important way of marking the academic space as separate to that of the public. While academic dress was worn, all of the wearers would be rendered one, unified whole.

Academic dress could be seen as a visual marker of status and respectability, and marking of the educational space as different to the “outside”. The questions around who was permitted to wear College colours and at what time raised considerable controversy in Senate meetings, indicating the importance of identifying individual bodies with the ethos of the College.<sup>63</sup> For example, in February of 1908, the Senate decided that students who had taken courses at the College but were not matriculated were allowed to wear the College colours.<sup>64</sup> In this sense, the idea of the College colours as status markers is highlighted. It is important to note here that both the students and the College staff, in this instance, were recognising what it meant to be “physically” marked as an SAC student. The non-matriculated student, who was only partially, or marginally, connected with the SAC, could have brought the reputation of the College into question, by not expressing in his behaviour the good values and morals which were espoused by the College.

An article in the *SAC Magazine* warns SAC students not to wear College colours when visiting the theatre and sitting in the “gods”. The article goes on to say that

it is not the proper part of the house for gentlemen to be in, and... their sense of decency should tell them that it is not compatible with the dignity of the premier College of South Africa. If their pocket is short the pit is the place to go.<sup>65</sup>

The idea that the “gentlemen” of the SAC would be seen interacting with people of a lower status seems to challenge their reputation, in the view of the author of the article. The reputation of the students was one of a certain status in society, and was not associated with

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<sup>63</sup> See SM, 11 Feb 1908.

<sup>64</sup> SM, 11 Feb 1908.

<sup>65</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(2), (1901), p. 59.

being short of funds. In this sense, the author's call for the students to sit in the "pit" is a call for them to literally act out their status. In spite of the fact that they could only afford certain tickets, the need to protect the reputation of the College if they were wearing College colours meant the movement of their bodies to particular areas of the space. Further, the wearing of College colours in the wrong part of the theatre would have been seen as damaging to the SAC's reputation.

The importance of status as marked through dress was something which the students who wrote for the *Magazine* clearly understood. There are numerous articles which detail, often in satirical language, what kind of clothing was appropriate for gentlemen. For example, in 1909, the *SAC Magazine* ran an article about hats, which detailed which types of hats should be worn by whom, when. The article notes, humorously, "that Straw hats are very fashionable now. They are worn by young men and suffragettes."<sup>66</sup> While this article is obviously written poking fun at the idea of fashion, and of men in particular being interested in fashion, what the article does point to is the fact that there was an awareness of clothing as status markers. The fact that the "straw hat" is worn by young men and suffragettes again comments on the marginal status of women at the College. For "young men" and "suffragettes" to wear the same clothing indicates the ways in which gender difference was expressed through external markers of one's status. In the context of the SAC, and the rules which were in place about wearing academic dress or College colours in certain places, the article about hats and who should wear them holds great significance. It shows the ways in which clothing was seen as a clear marker of respectability in this environment.<sup>67</sup>

Another article, entitled "As Ithers See Us", which detailed some of the issues with having a teaching university based on the model of the University of London, and the "terrible

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<sup>66</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 11 (2), (1910), p. 30-31.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Ross's work on clothing and status provides a useful way into thinking about the social significance of clothing as status markers. See Ross, R., *Clothing: A Global History*. (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2008).

isolation” which the staff of the College suffered, also used the idea of dress to express the colonial status of the College. The article states that

[t]he freedom and the ease of colonial life, which must appeal strongly to anyone who has no love for the formal or the conventional may, however, at first give a shock; as for instance, when we see the students walking about the College Court wearing gowns and felt hats.<sup>68</sup>

In this example, the juxtaposition of the academic gown, associated with refined educational facilities, and the felt hat, associated with outdoor colonial living, was used to express the status of the College in the Colony – a hybrid, and a space in which the refinement of the educational facility was always going to be met with the challenge of the “informal” and “unconventional” student population.

Other examples which show the importance of physical actions of the male students in the SAC space pertain to smoking and whether this should be permitted in public or not. In the rules which were adopted by Senate in 1885, the rule that there should be no smoking in the College precinct was adopted. The rules were later changed, and in 1906, the students were permitted to smoke in a Men’s Common Room.<sup>69</sup> The *SAC Magazines* also express the fact that smoking in one’s uniform would have brought discredit upon the institution. A good example of this came in 1910, where the editor of the Magazine complained that

Certain *men* (?) seem to think it elevates their dignity to stand smoking outside the College gates. We take this opportunity of begging them to remain inside since the S.R.C has not seen fit to appoint them as representatives of the College for public inspection.<sup>70</sup>

This example shows firstly how an attack on the reputation of these men calls their masculinity into question, by italicising the word “men” and including a question mark,

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<sup>68</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 9(2), (1908), p. 8-12. Written by Mr FJM Stratton, who acted as Prof Crawford’s deputy in 1907.

<sup>69</sup> *SAC Calendar for 1906*. (Townshend, Taylor and Snashall, Cape Town, 1906). One can only wonder where, and if, women were allowed to smoke on the SAC campus, and what the SAC gentlemen would have thought about this.

<sup>70</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 11(2), (1910), p. 24.

asking the reader whether these smokers could really be considered College men. The italicization of the word “men” could also be questioning the status of these students as “gentlemen” of a certain social standing. The example also shows the way in which the boundary between the public and private worlds at the SAC was one which needed to be protected. While by this stage, male students could smoke in the Common room inside the College, their smoking outside the College building brought this “private” practice clearly into the realm of the public, challenging the SAC’s reputation as training only gentlemen.

In this sense, the “distinctiveness” which was being provided at the SAC was as much about policing the boundaries between the public and private worlds in the Cape at the time as it was about students receiving a unique experience which would lead them to be manly, gentlemanly and respectable. If these boundaries were not adequately maintained, and the students did not act out what their education at the SAC had given them to set them apart from the general Cape citizenry, the reputation of the College as a unique and important institution would be called into question. Later chapters will show some of the ways in which the distinction between these public and private worlds at the College were constantly redefined and negotiated and were drawn in relation to the socio-political context of the Cape in the period under study. However, the construction of the SAC students as “different” from others in the Cape shows some of the ways in which what happened in the College could be marked as a body of “private” knowledge, which was acted out through certain behaviours, including the protection of one’s reputation.

### *The Janitor’s discipline*

In examining the records of the Senate, certain characters emerge in the disciplinary cases which were brought before this body. One of these is the janitor. The role of the janitor, and the students’ reactions to his presence as a disciplining figure, is a useful way of thinking

through ideas of gentlemanly status at the SAC. In particular, his presence as a disciplining figure, but one who had not been party to the “distinctive” educational experience at the College raises questions of the “public” and the “private” at the College. While the role of the janitor in College life may have been perceived as marginal by College students and staff at the time, the Senate minutes reflect a preoccupation on both the part of the staff and students with the conduct of the janitor, and his role as either an agent of discipline or an agent to be disciplined.<sup>71</sup> Once again, disciplinary cases involving the janitor speak to the distinctions which were being made between respectable gentlemen and rude or insolent men.

Durrill refers to the role of the janitor as a marginal figure in the life of the College, stating that from the 1830s, the janitor was perceived as “no gentleman” and was deemed a “social [inferior]” by the College students.<sup>72</sup> The janitor was subject to the abuse of students on many occasions before the period under study. The Janitor at the SAC was entrusted with multiple roles. Firstly, he was to maintain buildings, and stay on the property. At various points in the SAC’s history, he was also required to teach sports to the students. Finally, and most importantly, he was required to report any cases of students’ misbehaviour, whether during College hours or during recreation, directly to the Secretary of Senate.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the Janitor was a key mediating figure between the governance structures of the College and the student body. During the period under study there were four Janitors who served the College. Until 1882, Mr Wood was the Janitor. He was followed by Mr Basset (1882- 1896), Mr Middleton

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<sup>71</sup> An interesting case about the role of the gardener at the University of Sydney bears repeating here, if only as an anecdote that there were these kinds of interactions going on at multiple colonial educational institutions during the nineteenth century. The minutes of the Professorial Board, a board with a similar disciplinary function to the Senate at the SAC, reflect that in 1866, the gardener was disciplined as he “was in the habit of removing flowers from the garden, and that he used abusive language to the Bedell [caretaker] on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> inst. Also, that the conduct of himself and his family was generally unbecoming – the Board proceeded to enquire into the case. After examining of the Bedell, it was resolved that the gardener be required to refrain his situation at the end of one month from the date of meeting”. One can only guess what this “unbecoming” behaviour was, but undoubtedly it showed some transgression of status boundaries. Sydney University Archives, Proctorial Board, Acc No 607, Group – G. 12, Series – 4, No. –1, 22 Nov 1866.

<sup>72</sup> Durrill, “Shaping a settler elite”, p. 225.

<sup>73</sup> SM, 24 Nov 1896.

(1896-1903), and finally by Mr Browne.<sup>74</sup> The fact that similar complaints were brought to the Senate both about and by the janitorial staff over this period indicates that these instances were about more than the individual personalities of the janitors, but rather were about how the position of janitor was perceived.

The Senate minutes reflect the fact that the Janitor was often reacted to with mixed feelings from both staff and students. Numerous complaints appear in the Senate minutes from the Janitor, who stated that students had treated him with disrespect. For example, in 1880, Reitz was

charged before the Senate with having used grossly insulting language to the Janitor [Mr James Wood]. He admitted the foul expressions, but stated that he had said it of and not to the Janitor. Having expressed regret for the language used he was [asked] to read a written apology to the Janitor, before the assembled students in the Hall. The apology to be first submitted to and approved by the Secretary of Senate and to be confirmed and Reitz to work in the Hall for two hours on the two successive Saturdays.<sup>75</sup>

Reitz's claim that he used the insulting language to speak about Wood, rather than to him indicates that the student felt that it was acceptable to speak about the Janitor in derogatory terms. Further, the fact that he was presenting this statement to the Senate indicates that he thought that this would be a shared belief amongst both staff and students, or at least that it would be less punishable than blatantly insulting the Janitor face-to-face.

Reitz's ideas about the janitor, and using insulting language to speak about him, reflect the idea that due to the kind of work which the janitor was doing, he was seen to be of lower

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<sup>74</sup> The names of the janitors seem to indicate that they were white and of British or Scottish origins. From the minutes of the Senate and Council, it is unclear whether the janitors were in charge of other domestic staff. Of course, this information would be useful in examining their position in terms of the social hierarchy at the College more broadly. However, for the purpose of my argument here, what is important is that they were seen to be of lower status by the teaching and administrative staff, as well as the students, at the College. There was only one janitor at a time, and his tasks appear to have been confined to those described above.

<sup>75</sup> SM, 1 Nov 1880.

status than Reitz and his peers. The types of disciplinary cases which were brought to the Senate regarding disrespectful conduct in classrooms were for the most part not connected with disrespectful behaviour towards teachers, except in exceptional circumstances, but rather with failure to complete work, using “unfair means” in exams, and failing to comply with rules which stated that students were obliged to attend classes at all times. This difference in disciplinary cases between those connected with the janitor and those connected with teaching staff could indicate that the students understood the relationship with the janitor in terms of their superior social status: while they were the “gentlemen” of the SAC, the janitor was of a lower status and therefore less respectable than they were. According to Durrill, throughout the nineteenth century, the janitors at the College were drawn from the class of tradesmen and artisans in the Cape colony.<sup>76</sup> One can assume therefore, that the janitors had not received any formal higher education. In this sense, the distinctiveness of the SAC experience for the students marked their status as superior to that of the janitor.

The punishment meted out to the student is equally interesting. The Senate’s request for Reitz to apologise to the janitor in front of the group of assembled students indicates the Senate’s attempt to shame Reitz. By calling Reitz in front of his peers, with whom he should have appeared “reliable” and “manly”, Reitz would have had to admit his fault, and apologise to someone of lower status. Reitz’s fate would have served as a warning to the other students and would have shown that cases like these would be taken seriously by the Senate. The need for the male students at the SAC to behave as gentlemen would have overridden any negative feelings towards the janitor stemming from the Council itself.

A public apology in front of his peers would have brought Reitz’s honour into question. If he had behaved in a disorderly or disobedient fashion, even if it was towards someone of the same status, it would be perceived as dishonourable. According to Ross, honour has to do

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<sup>76</sup> Durrill, “Shaping a settler elite”, p. 225.

with the ways of expressing one's position in the world, through many different aspects of life, including ritual, food and body language.<sup>77</sup> It is important to note that the concept of honour is innately social in character—it is about the performance and display of a particular social identity in space. In this sense, at the SAC, honourable behaviour would have been performing a particular gendered identity. While the honourable man in this case, Reitz, would have had to apologise in front of his peers, bringing his honour into question, the honour of Wood, the janitor, would not have been questioned by Reitz, who would have seen his education as a mark of his superiority in comparison with the janitor's lower status. In this sense, for Reitz, it was questionable that someone of Wood's status would have had honour at all.

The Senate minutes reveal that negative attitudes towards the janitor were not confined to the student body. In 1892, Professor Ritchie complained that the Janitor had “behaved in a very rude and insolent manner to himself and members of his family” and called for the janitor to be dismissed.<sup>78</sup> Particularly interesting in this case is the fact that the words “rude and insolent” are used, which are often seen in the Senate minutes when describing the misconduct of SAC students. In this sense, Professor Ritchie was infantilising the janitor, whose status and occupation saw to it that he was seen as a perpetual child, and was excluded from the respect afforded to men of similar age. It was decided that the Janitor should not be dismissed, due to his extended service to the SAC and his large family who was dependent on him, but Bassett was warned by the Senate that “a reputation of such conduct will lead to dismissal”.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, the concepts of status and respectability were ones which held currency for staff, both academic and otherwise at the College. By warning Bassett that his

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<sup>77</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> SM, 28 Jan 1892.

<sup>79</sup> SM, 2 Feb 1892.

conduct could lead to a bad reputation, the Council showed that his status within the College was under threat.

The janitor's conduct was a matter of great concern for the Senate, who wished to protect the students from his "coarse language" and unrefined behaviour.<sup>80</sup> When a janitor, at this stage a man called Middleton, was seen by a professor "inflicting cruel punishment on a young schoolboy in the College grounds", the Senate warned him that no such behaviour would be tolerated at the College, but that they accepted his explanation that "under strong provocation, he had lost control of his temper".<sup>81</sup> In this sense, the stoicism and reliability which was associated with the gentlemen who attended the College, or taught there, was placed in stark contrast with the masculinity of the janitor, who was beyond control of his base instincts. The fact that that Middleton was allowed to "[lose] control of his temper" indicates some difference in the understanding of the classed positions of the students of the college and the Janitor, and the implications which this had on the kinds of "masculine" behaviours which they were able to perform.

It becomes clear in the disciplinary cases that the College was seeking to protect its reputation within the wider Cape society. While it was a punishable offence for students to treat their professors with disrespect, or to damage College property, it was equally important for students to "abstain, whether on the College premises or not, from all conduct tending to bring discredit on the Institution."<sup>82</sup> The students were thus seen as direct reflections of the way in which they had been trained at the College. The conception of places of higher

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<sup>80</sup> At various points in the College's history, the janitor was entrusted with administering punishment for students who had transgressed College rules. According to Durrill, there were times at which this included being in charge of the "Black Hole" which was an isolation room with no windows, where students who had disobeyed rules were sent as punishment. Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p. 226. It seems that the "Black Hole" was no longer being used by the period under study.

<sup>81</sup> SM, 2 Feb 1897.

<sup>82</sup> Rules of the South African College, confirmed in Senate, for 1904. These were also printed in the *SAC Calendar for 1903*, (SA "Electric" Printing and Publishing Co, Cape Town, 1903).

learning being spaces in which adults could engage with each other would have seemed a foreign concept to both staff and students at the College during the period under study. Indeed, the students who found themselves at the SAC were held up to rigorous standards of discipline which sought to reinforce hierarchies related to age, gender and status.

This chapter has shown some of the ways in which the SAC was seeking to provide a distinctive education to its male students, in particular. What this entailed was an adherence to certain gendered and hierarchical norms within the College space and then translating these into public displays of honour and reputation. While the “private” world at the College, in which students were receiving an education which extended beyond a purely academic one, was constructed as the space in which the “distinctiveness” of the College was located, this was only meaningful when it came into contact with the “public” world at the Cape, and in South Africa more generally. In this sense, the ideas of what it meant to be a man in the College were significant as they required the students to act in particular ways which would reinforce the reputation of the College in the “public” sphere in South Africa.

All of the examples which this chapter has provided show some of the ways in which there was an emergent idea of “respectable” behaviour at the SAC which involved protecting a certain kind of masculinity. This masculinity was defined in opposition to women, and to men who had not been educated at the SAC. The status of the SAC as a public institution is called into question in this discussion. In particular, the boundaries between the knowledge which those inside the College had access to, and that which was “public”, was protected through the display and performance of certain behaviours outside the College walls. Further, the reaction of the students to a character like the janitor, who was seen not to possess this “distinction”, indicates that there was a sense that the SAC education led the students to think of themselves as superior to those who had not had this education. Ultimately, this discussion has muddied the boundary between the “public” and “private” at the College. The ideas of

“reputation” and “respectability”, in particular, have shown the ways in which these concepts are always deeply individual and public concurrently. The reputation and good behaviour of students at the College, through their acting as proper “men”, and their adherence to certain rules and regulations reflected on the College itself, and its own “public” image. The following chapter builds on these themes, examining the role of the Council in public life at the Cape.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 2

### *Writing (at) the College: Public and private knowledge at the SAC*

Ann Stoler has called for historians to “focus on archiving as a process rather than archives as things”.<sup>1</sup> Stoler argues that “colonial archives were both sites of the imaginary and institutions that fashioned histories as they concealed, revealed and reproduced the power of the state.”<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I seek to explore Stoler’s idea that archives should be understood as a way in which history is shaped, created and understood, and view the SAC’s archive as a space in which the institutions own power was located. In doing so, the distinction between what was “public” and “private” knowledge at the College is brought to light, as I indicate the ways in which the records of the SAC have dual roles within the “life history” of the College. The meetings of Council and Senate were recorded in minute books which have been preserved in an administrative archive at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and these records perform a role which is both public and private. These minutes detail discussions which the student body of the SAC were not party to at the time at which they were created, and they are now “public” records for researchers of the College and UCT’s history.

As the previous chapter has shown, having had an education within the walls of the SAC, the SAC students were party to knowledge about certain ways of behaving and understanding the world which constituted a “private” body of knowledge beyond that taught in the College curriculum. The staff of the College, the Senate, and Council were in relative positions of power in relation to the students and the running of the institution. In thinking about the boundaries between the public and private worlds at the SAC, the staff were privy to another “layer” of private knowledge, with particular discussions and decisions being limited to them,

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<sup>1</sup> Stoler, A. “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: on the content in the form”, in C. Hamilton, V. Harris, J. Taylor, M. Pickover, G. Reid and R. Saleh (eds.), *Refiguring the Archive*, (David Phillip, Cape Town, 2002), pp. 82 -101, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance”, p. 89.

and occurring in socially-confined spaces. Part of what this protection of the private by staff meant was the protection of the private world of the students, and the protection of the idea of the SAC's distinctiveness. The following chapter examines this distinction between "public" and "private" at the College, showing the ways in which the Council members in particular played both public and private roles at the College.

The first issue which this chapter seeks to address is the role of the Council, in particular, in both "public" and "private" spaces and in the creation of knowledge about the SAC. In doing so, the nature of the distinction between "public" and "private" knowledge is discussed, and reassessed in light of the fact that the SAC archives are to be understood as sites of contestation and "private" discussions, as well as "public" records. The previous chapter has shown the way in which the SAC was working to construct a particular type of masculinity which was based on certain perceptions of the status of students, and their definition as "gentlemen" of a certain "distinction". The discussion of the role of Council and Senate in this period indicates some of the ways in which a public institution was being run, and also points to their own conceptions of the public for which they were providing.

The distinction between "public" and "private" knowledge and spaces requires some discussion here. While these terms are often used to refer to the difference between the domestic, feminine, private world, and the public, masculine world, the current discussion shows the ways in which these concepts were less fixed than they were often conceived to be. In a discussion on the use of the separate spheres model in British gender history writing, Davidoff has argued that

"Public" and "private" are categories of relationship posed as opposite and mutually exclusive terms. Such a formulation inevitably connotes hierarchy; one condition is evaluated more positively than the other. Within this dualism, people are limited by a falsely universal position. When they are assigned to

either category, differential consequences follow in terms of power and access to resources. Such categorizing marks boundaries, providing opportunities for some, constraints for others. Bounded categories tend to become metaphors and are imbedded in language and as images.<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I show that the recording of information in archival spaces can be seen as a way of breaking down this “dualism” of public/private. For example, the role of the Council members in “public” Cape life, which I discuss below, situates them firmly in the public sphere of influence. However, their role in the “private” Council meetings allowed them access to information about the governance of the College which was not open to the general public. Part of the work of the Council and Senate, in these “private” spaces, can indeed be thought of as fulfilling a “domestic” role, as these bodies were entrusted with the role of maintaining the College in often concealed ways. In this sense, the term “internal” could stand in place of the word “private” in many cases. The discussions which the Council and Senate were having in meeting spaces constituted a body of “internal” decisions which shaped how the SAC was run. This involved making decisions about policies, punishments and the role of the College in its society. However, the easy movement of certain members of Council, in particular, between their roles as “public” men in Cape society and as Council members, problematises the boundary between the “public” and the “private” at the SAC.

Research on the SAC makes it clear that “records” performed a very important role in the College space. Acting as private sources of information for Council and Senate members during the period under study, their current role is to allow researchers to make these “private” meetings the subject of “public” enquiry. Due to their “official” nature, however, there are particular types of information which these sources can give. In particular, they give the researcher glimpses into particular moments in the history of the College, usually without

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<sup>3</sup> Davidoff, L. “Gender and the “Great Divide”: Public and Private in British Gender History”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 15(1), (2003), pp. 11-27, p. 12.

making reference to the “public” experience of these events, both outside of staff experience and outside the College itself. In this sense, these records are useful in that they provide a picture of the inner workings of the College, but they do not always indicate the implications of events in the general public for the College, and vice versa. Most importantly, what these records answer directly are the questions which the institution itself had once asked. The first part of this chapter attempts to address this shortcoming by examining some of the “public” roles which Council members played, indicating their presence in both the “public” and “private” worlds of the Cape.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to comment on the symbolic value of archives within institutions such as the SAC. The importance of committing discussions or disagreements, in the few cases in which these were recorded, to paper, shows a perception on the part of the SAC members that these records would serve as an archive of “private” and institutional knowledge to serve future generations. Stoler’s work on archival knowledge within the nineteenth century Netherlands Indies, which she describes as being about the “commitment to paper, and the political and personal work that such inscriptions perform”, is a useful way into thinking about the meaning of written records.<sup>5</sup> Stoler suggests that historians, or ethnographers, should view archives as “condensed sites of epistemological and political anxiety rather than as skewed and biased sources”.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, what is “left out” of the sources should not be viewed as a hindrance to the historian, but should rather be seen as a way in which, in this example, the

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<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the importance of written records was also recognised by students. As the previous chapter has mentioned, when an article was printed in the *SAC Magazine* which was deemed to bring the editors’ chivalry into question, a written apology was printed in the *Magazine*, pointing to an awareness of the longevity of print. The student magazine contained a column in each issue called “Overheard in the Quad”. The column detailed events which had happened in the College, often at the male residence, College House. The language used in the columns was often used so that the articles could only be understood by students who were aware of the context and the people being referred to in the articles. For example, the articles would often give students’ names, but would blank out certain letters within them. What this meant was that the records were only meaningful for people who were privy to the “private” or internal knowledge at the College.

<sup>5</sup> Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, p. 20.

SAC was seeking to construct an identity for itself in very particular ways. In Antoinette Burton's edited volume, *Archive Stories*, she states that the "if the official archive is a workplace, it is also a panopticon whose claim to total knowledge is matched by its capacity for total surveillance".<sup>7</sup> The archive is thus, for the purpose of this chapter, seen as a site of power, and a site which Council members were exquisitely aware of. The "longevity" of the archive and the stability of print were things which governed the way in which Council members behaved during meetings, and thus shaped outcomes of meetings. The few recorded instances of disagreement between Council members, therefore, show that these were important cases, and ones which had strong political implications for those working at the SAC.

#### *Public men and the public institution*

As a starting point for this chapter, I wish to illustrate the role of the Council members in public life at the Cape. It is important to briefly discuss the difference between the Council and the Senate at the SAC. The Council and the Senate of the SAC were the initial governing structure of the College and were present since the College's inception in 1829.<sup>8</sup> The Council was responsible for more general questions of the College's running – for example, finances, buildings, appointments and questions of higher education in the Colony. The Senate was responsible for the running of the College on a day-to-day basis, which meant the discipline of students, academic questions, such as those of syllabus and so on. In Walker's characteristic style, he describes the first meeting of Senate as being "prophetic of so many subsequent Senate meetings, [they] drew up a time-table and demanded money".<sup>9</sup> In 1878, the passing of the South African College Act meant that the composition of the Council was

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<sup>7</sup>Burton, A. "Introduction: Archive Fever, *Archive Stories*", in A. Burton (ed), *Archive Stories: Facts, fictions and the writing of history*, (Duke University Press, Durham, 2005), pp. 1-23, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 15.

changed to a group of nine: three were nominated by the Governor, three by the College Council and the final three by Life Governors of the College who were the ex-shareholders and donors to the College.<sup>10</sup> The Senate's subordinate role to Council was rethought in 1897, when Senate was granted the permission to read its report along with Council's at the Annual Prize-giving. Senate was also briefly given the right to have a seat on Council, but this was found impractical and therefore did not last.<sup>11</sup> Finally, it is necessary to mention that the Cape Town City Council was given a seat on the SAC Council in 1902, and thus, the College Council included representatives from both educational and political backgrounds. The distinction between "officials" of the government and officials who worked at the SAC was therefore unclear.

The Council members at the SAC were generally prominent members of Cape society. Their multiple roles within Cape society meant that the distinction between what was public knowledge and what was private was often blurred. These prominent Cape men's status was used as a way in which the SAC aimed to reinforce its own status as a public institution. The SAC's own idea of itself as a public institution was based on its perceived role as central to education in South Africa. Once again, this problematises the boundaries between the SAC and the society in which it was located, and calls into question the ways in which the meetings of these very public figures were constructed as private.

There are two major themes that emerge when looking at who the Councillors of the SAC were in the period under study. The first is that many of the SAC Council members were members of parliament, involved in politics, or were prominent politicians. The second is that many of them had been educated at the SAC. For example, Sir Thomas Edward Fuller served on the Council of the SAC from 1878 to 1899. Educated at a private Baptist College in

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<sup>10</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 55.

England, Fuller had never attended a formal “university” himself. He acted as editor of the *Cape Times* in the 1860s and early 1870s, and then was an active campaigner for the establishment of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, which was founded in 1873. He was also a member of the Cape Legislative Assembly.<sup>12</sup> Sir Thomas Scanlen (Council member from 1887-1896) and Hon WP Schreiner (Council member from 1890-1900 and 1913-1915) were both Cape Premiers. Sir HH Juta (1897-1909) was a lawyer, judge and later parliamentarian. Council members from this period also included a Colonial Secretary, Hon JW Sauer, a member of the Cape Town City Council and later mayor of Cape Town, H Liberman, and a mayor of Queenstown and later member of the Native Laws Commission, Sir W Bisset Berry. The Chairmen of Council in this period ranged from Sir David Tennant (1878-1885), who attended private school in Cape Town and had no higher education, but was a practicing lawyer and speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon Justice Smith (1885-1894), Hon JW Sauer (1894-1901), and finally Rev JM Russell, who served as Chairman of Council from 1901 to 1918 and was the minister of St Andrew’s Church.

Due to the nature of the College’s records, the role of the Council members in public life at the Cape is not often mentioned in the archive. The role of the Council members in public life at the Cape would have been self-evident to others on the Council, and therefore, the recording of these dual roles would have been seen as unnecessary. The business of the Council was administrative, and thus, the individual personalities on the Council remain largely concealed, except in cases in which there are marked disagreements between Council members, which will be discussed below. However, these dual, or multiple, roles of the Council members are commented on in the reports in the *SAC Magazine* which describe Commemoration Day celebrations. The Commemoration Day celebrations were held annually and were a celebration of the SAC’s unique role in South Africa. For example, in

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<sup>12</sup> Metrowich, FR. “Fuller, Sir Thomas Ekins”, in *South African Dictionary of Biography*, WJ de Kock (ed), Vol 1, (Nationale Boekhande Bpk, Cape Town, 1968), p. 304.

1902, it is noted that the Attorney-General, Mr TL Graham, who was a Council member from 1901-1904, presided over the proceedings, and was joined by the Governor, the Mayor of Cape Town, WP Schreiner, who was a previous Prime Minister, who had resigned from office in 1900. He had also been a Council member of the College from 1890-1900. It was at these public events such as the Commemoration Days that the role of Council members as public figures was emphasised. Indeed, in Rev JM Russell's speech, in which he thanked the Governor for his attendance at the event, he noted that "there were several colleges doing admirable service in regard to University Education, but that the College had a special place in the life of South Africa".<sup>13</sup> This speech came at the close of the South African War, and spoke to the role of the SAC in promoting racial tolerance between English and Dutch South Africans.

The speech also stated that the SAC had a unique role in producing a particular type of South African man. He stated that

[t]here was no educational institution in this country which produced a larger number of distinguished men in every walk of life, and in all the professions, than the South African College. (Applause). Men who had written their names largely and boldly in the pages of the history of this country, and men, who in addition to possessing great educational attainments, were men of ability and integrity, and good citizens and gentlemen in the truest and best sense of the word.<sup>14</sup>

No doubt this point was underscored by the presence of prominent SAC "Old Boys" on the College Council. For example, both Schreiner and Graham had attended the SAC. In this sense, the role of the College in the South African public sphere was emphasised. These "distinguished" men became Council members, which once again reinforced the idea of what it meant to be a good (South African) (male) citizen. They were men of "ability" and "integrity", who, in the framing of the College, as represented by Russell, were playing a

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<sup>13</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p.7.

<sup>14</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p.3.

prominent role in Cape life because of their schooling and higher education at the South African College, which had imbibed in them the values befitting of “public” figures. The idea of citizenship as intimately linked to status, the distinctiveness of the SAC experience and gender is brought to light in this quotation. Russell’s speech also thanked the Governor for attending the proceedings and was followed by a speech by the mayor of Cape Town. The importance of the College as a government institution was highlighted at these occasions.

The fact that many Council members were schooled at the SAC is hardly surprising given that during the time at which these men were of school- and College-going age, there were few options for education in South Africa. However, the fact that many returned to act on the Council shows the prominence which the serving on the Council seems to have held for local “public” men. For example, H de Smidt, who served on the Council from 1888 to 1892, and then 1901-1903 was educated at the SAC, and was a statistician. In 1891, during the same period at which he was a Council member at the SAC, he was in the process of conducting the first general census of the Cape Colony. He was also Under-colonial Secretary at the time. Some other Council members who were educated at the SAC included Hon WP Schreiner, Hon JH Hofmeyr, the politician, who served from 1882 to 1897, and JH Hofmeyr who examined Dutch and Hebrew at the University of the Cape of Good Hope, and served on the Council from 1896 to 1899.

The prominence of “Old Boys” on the Council of the SAC indicates the importance of the networks which were created between the College and its past students. The Union of Old Students was formed at the SAC in 1886, after the requests of Professor Lewis, Rev Dr Kotze and Hon JH Hofmeyr.<sup>15</sup> The role of the past students on the Council of the SAC once again reinforces the idea of public and private roles. While they had once been members of the

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<sup>15</sup> Olivier, A. *A Guide to the History of the South African College and UCT, 1829-1987*. (University of Cape Town Pamphlet, Cape Town, 1987).

student body at the SAC, and were party to the private knowledge which distinguished them from their contemporaries in the Cape, they were now public men, who were party to the “backstage” private knowledge about the running of the SAC. What is notable from the above examples is that these were men of considerable *public* prominence in the Cape during the period. Their roles on the SAC Council were not completely divorced from their roles as Cape politicians and businessmen. The role of the SAC as *the* public college in the Cape Colony, and in South Africa was underscored by the fact that the College was being run by public men.<sup>16</sup>

In each issue of the *SAC Magazine* in which the Commemoration Day celebrations are mentioned, the names of all of the public figures who presided over the events are listed. Over the period under study, this did not change. The “public” status of the SAC being expressed through having “public” figures on the Council and celebrating the College’s history remained important to the College’s construction of its own status. In 1913, for example, the Senate minutes report that the Commemoration Day dinner was attended by many prominent figures including JX Merriman, Senator JAC Graaf, Sir James Molteno, the mayor of Cape Town, the Acting Town Clerk, editors of the *Cape Times*, *Cape Argus* and *South African News*, the Acting Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chairman of the Hospital Board, the President of the Royal Society of South Africa.<sup>17</sup> The importance of having these prominent people celebrating the status of the SAC meant an acknowledgement of its role within Cape society and public affairs. While these men did not all serve on the SAC Council, their presence at SAC events meant an affirmation of the “public” importance of the institution.

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<sup>16</sup> It is not my intention here to go into detail about the individual lives and achievements (which were many) of the Councillors, but rather to indicate their role in Cape society. For detailed accounts of their lives, many have individual biographies, while general information can be found in the *Dictionary of South African Biography*, or in Walker’s *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, or Ritchie’s *The History of the SAC*.

<sup>17</sup> SM, 7 Oct 1913.

### *Private discussions and public debates*

The above discussion has shown the ways in which the SAC Council men were largely “public” figures in the Cape during the period under study. I now turn to some of the ways in which the knowledge which the Council members had access to, and were generating, was often ostensibly public but was made private through its being discussed in certain ways by certain role-players at the SAC. This “private” knowledge was that which was generated during meetings of the Senate or Council, but which had implications on the running of the College and was therefore “public” in its use in the College space. The ways in which the Council generated private knowledge is made clear in the few cases in which there were disagreements about the decisions which it had to take. The tensions between private conversations and the creation of a public image are indicated in these cases. Once again, this discussion points to the centrality of the College’s own construction of its reputation within the Cape and later, within South Africa more broadly.

In 1905, the matter of race and admission to the College was brought before the Council. Although it is not explicitly stated in the records of the SAC, it is likely that the admissions policies of the SAC were being questioned at this time due to the fact that the questions of race and education were an important public issue at this time. The passing of the School Board Act of 1905, which made education up to the age of fourteen years compulsory for white children, meant that questions of race, education and segregation were being discussed in the public sphere.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that the Town Council approached the SAC about their admissions policies with regards to race as a result of increasing “public” interest in and attention on the matter. The Council and Senate minutes generally reflect direct concerns with the College’s functioning, and thus, the idea of race and higher education in general was

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<sup>18</sup> Adhikari, M. “Coloured Identity and the Politics of Coloured Education: The Origin of the Teachers’ League of South Africa”, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), (1994), pp. 101-126, p. 111.

never addressed by the College. Furthermore, the context of the Cape at this time, in terms of changing ideas about education and social access, is not directly referenced in the archive. In this sense, I have sought to reconstruct why these debates may have come up at the time at which they did.

The ways in which race, and the inclusion of black students, at the SAC was spoken about shows the ways in which the idea of “public” access was often less simple than allowing equal access to SAC facilities and teaching. When applicants who were not white applied to the College, this posed a challenge to the established status quo at the College. It meant that the “distinction” associated with being an SAC student, which was largely defined in terms of being a (white) male SAC student, needed to be rethought and redefined.

What is particularly meaningful about the example of race and access to the SAC is the fact that the private discussions about race and access were often different from public statements which were made about who should be allowed into the SAC. In this sense, another layer is added to the distinction between public and private at the SAC. The student body, and those who were “insiders” and party to the distinction which the SAC gave them, formed the first layer of private, or internal, distinctive, knowledge at the SAC. They were, by virtue of their education at the SAC, marked as different from the general male population in Cape Town at the time.

Race and admission to the SAC had been a matter of discussion for the SAC long before it was declared open. There are a number of cases in which coloured students applied to the SAC School and were refused admission. For example, in 1904, a year before the declaration of public access to the SAC, a Mr Shahmohamed wrote a letter to the Principal of the South African College School, “asking for further information about the application for admission

to College for his son”.<sup>19</sup> The Principal was told by the Council to reply, saying that he had received the letter but that he had “nothing further to add”. One can assume in this case that Mr Shahmohamed’s son had been denied access to the College. This was not the first time in which the position of “coloured” students at the College was questioned. In 1895, for example, a worried parent had written to the school “objecting to the presence of a Mohammedan boy as a pupil in the College School. The Secretary was instructed to inform Mr Blenkin that ‘there is no Mohammedan boy in the School.’”<sup>20</sup> Two years later, an applicant called Mr James Esau Makotha, described in the Senate minutes as “Basuto”, was refused admission to the College on the grounds that he “would be better advised to enter the Zonnebloem College, particularly as the Students of the Junior Matriculation Classes were several years his juniors.”<sup>21</sup> Makotha’s rejection from the SAC was framed in terms of a question of age rather than that of race, in spite of the distinction which had been made about age not being a qualifying criterion for admission to the College.<sup>22</sup> This case did occur after the admission of the first coloured student at the SAC, Abdullah Abdurahman, who was educated there in the mid- 1880s.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, the reactions to racial issues at the College were not uniform, and when coloured or black students were refused admission, it was often framed in terms of other characteristics rather than race.<sup>24</sup>

Bickford-Smith has written extensively on racial segregation at the Cape during the period under study. In an article in which middle-class attitudes to poverty are discussed, Bickford-

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<sup>19</sup> CM, 17 June 1904.

<sup>20</sup> CM, 4 Feb 1895.

<sup>21</sup> SM, 18 May 1897.

<sup>22</sup> *The Report of the SAC Council, 1887* refers to a gentleman of “ripe years” who had qualified as a gold assayer. (G23 – ’88)

<sup>23</sup> Nasson, B. “Abdurahman, Abdullah (1872–1940)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73214>, accessed 27 Sept 2011]

<sup>24</sup> Of course, this means that it is difficult to say with complete certainty that the applicants were refused admission because of their race. However, the following case suggests that the discussion of race at the SAC was a charged topic in this period, and could mean that the earlier decisions to refuse admission to the coloured and black applicants were made along similar racial lines.

Smith argues that class fears were often spoken about in terms of race in the late nineteenth century Cape.<sup>25</sup> Part of the idea of race and class being linked meant that Cape liberals, in particular, felt that European civilisation was superior to that which they saw in the colonies, but that “if Blacks did become like Whites they deserved equal treatment”.<sup>26</sup> This partly accounts for the admission into the College of Abdullah Abdurahman, who went on to become a Town Councillor in 1904.<sup>27</sup> If a student could conform to the “distinctive” values which were being propagated at the SAC, they could be admitted. The fear was that by letting in students who were not white, the role of the SAC students in the “dominant class in Cape Town” would be hindered.<sup>28</sup> Bickford-Smith also points to the increasing movement of black people into Cape Town during the early 1880s solidifying some race feelings from the dominant white class in Cape Town.<sup>29</sup>

At a Council meeting in 1905, the question of admission for black and coloured students was considered. The Acting Secretary of Council reported that the Advocate Alexander, who was acting on behalf of the City Corporation, had asked whether admission had been refused to coloured students at the SAC. A joint meeting of Council and Senate was called to consider the matter, and a unanimous vote was taken, stating

that the Constitution of the S.A. College makes it clear that the departments of the College are open without restriction as to the creed or colour to all applicants for admission who pass the entrance examination of the College, which is ordinarily the Matriculation of the University of the Cape of Good Hope or an equivalent examination.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Bickford-Smith, V. “Dangerous Cape Town: Middle Class Attitudes to Poverty in Cape Town in the late nineteenth century”, in C.Saunders, H. Phillips and E. van Heyningen (eds.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, 4, (1981), pp. 29-65.

<sup>26</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Bickford-Smith also points to the fact that Abdurahman was known to be of a fair complexion, which Bickford-Smith argues was “almost certainly a reason for his acceptance as a child into the elite South African College School”. Bickford-Smith, V. “South African Urban History, Racial Segregation and the Unique Case of Cape Town?”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(1), (1995), pp. 63-78, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 80.

<sup>30</sup> CM, 6 Oct 1905.

The decision which was made by the Council seems, judging from the Council minutes, to have been carried without much discussion or disagreement from individual Council members. In practice, however, the enforcement of this charter for public access was not always adhered to. Previous practices at the School and College, as the above examples show, set little precedent for open admissions. Further, the decision to admit students of all races who had fulfilled certain requirements was left out of the 1905 Annual Report of the SAC. This absence is interesting, especially in light of the fact that the decision to admit women to the College was publicised in the Annual report of 1887. The decisions about open-access to all races at the College were still, in some cases, debated in the period following this declaration, and thus, the decision not to make this declaration public is important. Once again, this points to the importance of written records as providing “official” proof of decisions which were made in “private” forums like Council meetings.

The most controversial case which dealt with the issue of race was about Harold Cressy. This case also shows the distinctions between public and private knowledge. Cressy later founded the Teachers League of South Africa with Abdullah Abdurahman and was involved in the African People’s Organisation.<sup>31</sup> Before applying to the SAC, he had already pursued a teaching degree at Zonnebloem College, where he graduated in 1905.<sup>32</sup> The minutes of the Council regarding Cressy’s case are a rare example in which disagreement between Council members is referenced directly. On 18 February 1909, some years after the ruling about admission to people of all “colours” to the College, “a letter was submitted from Harold Cressy asking if Council will admit a coloured student to the College to study for B.A.”<sup>33</sup>

There are a number of interesting points to note about the case. The first is that at a meeting the following week, a letter was read to the Council in which Mr Fred Smith, the mayor of

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<sup>31</sup> For a biography of Harold Cressy, see Adhikari, M, *Against the current: A biography of Harold Cressy*, (Cape Town, Harold Cressy High School, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Adhikari, *Against the current*, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> CM, 18 Feb 1909

Cape Town at the time, wrote that he supported Cressy's application to the College. Fred Smith was also a Council member at this time. At this same meeting, two Council members, Buissonne and Centlivres, spoke against Cressy's admission, saying that "it was not in the interests of the College to do so and that it would drive away many of the other students."<sup>34</sup> Jagger, another member of Council, stated that "he did not consider the admission of one or two coloured students among so many others would do any harm to the institution", and moved for the meeting to be adjourned, which the Council members, apart from Buissonne and Centlivres agreed to.

Jagger was a close political ally of Abdurahman, and had taken up Cressy's cause after his rejection from Rhodes and Victoria College. Jagger was, at this stage, a Member of Parliament, and chairman of the Cape Town School Board. Abdurahman was a city councillor who, according to Adhikari, reiterated to Jagger that the City Council had given the SAC a considerable grant on the condition that admissions were open to all who met the entrance requirements. In this sense, Jagger's different roles in the public sphere in the Cape intersected during this meeting.<sup>35</sup>

It was decided that Buissonne should write to a Judge Kotze, who was a member of the University College Council at Rhodes University College, "with a view to obtaining further information about the applicant", as Cressy had been denied admission there as well.<sup>36</sup> It is interesting that this task was entrusted to a Council member who had opposed the admission of Cressy into the College. The assumption of the Council must have been that gentlemanly

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<sup>34</sup> CM, 24 Feb 1909. Given the educational context of Cape Town, and South Africa more generally at this time, it is unclear where these students would be driven to. I have been unable to find biographic information about Buissonne, but Centlivres was the father of future UCT Chancellor A van der Sandt Centlivres and had served as the mayor of Rondebosch for a time.

<sup>35</sup> Adhikari argues that Jagger used his influence over Jagger, a current member of parliament and chairman of the Cape Town School Board. See Adhikari, *Against the current*, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> CM, 24 Feb 1909.

behaviour would ensure that Buisinne reported the information which he received from Kotze accurately.

At a meeting the following week, no decision on the case was made, and the meeting was adjourned once again.<sup>37</sup> The length of time and amount of attention given to this case indicates the way in which the outcome of the case was seen to be a matter of great import for the Council members. The following week, Rev JM Russell, chairman of Council, brought to the meeting the decision which had been decided upon in 1905, “that the departments of the College are open without restriction as to creed or colour...”<sup>38</sup> This shows the way in which the Council minutes were used as a reference in cases like this. Dr Fuller, also present at the meeting as a representative from the College’s Senate, then reported that a vote had been taken by the Senate and fifteen out of the seventeen members present had “no objection to the admission of a coloured student”. Buisinne and Centlivres once again “spoke strongly against the admission of the student”, but in a vote the decision for Cressy to be admitted to the College was carried by four votes to two, with Buisinne and Centlivres voting against the motion.<sup>39</sup>

What is interesting about this case is not that Cressy was admitted, but rather that the discussions surrounding his admission were even being held, in light of the fact that the Council had made a decision on the admission of all races to the College just four years previously. This case also shows an unusual instance in which there is *recorded* discord between the Council members, with two Council members being vocally opposed to Cressy’s admission. The fact that records were being kept by the College meant that there was awareness that these were signs of “professional” practice, but were also guides to future members of the College Council and Senate. In a discussion of the creation of scientific

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<sup>37</sup> CM, 1 March 1909.

<sup>38</sup> CM, 8 March 1909.

<sup>39</sup> CM, 8 March 1909.

knowledge, Griffiths argues that the difference between amateur and professional practice was a “reverence for records”.<sup>40</sup> The creation of a record of the “private” discussions of the Senate and Council blur the line between public and private access once again. While students and “outsiders” to the College at the time would not have had access to this private information, those working on the Council after this period, and current researchers can access this seemingly “private” knowledge. In this sense, the distinction between private decisions made by the SAC in which no debate is recorded, and decisions made in which the debate was recorded, shows an awareness of what it meant to be “on record” as disagreeing with the present motion. Moreover, one can assume that much of the discussion within these “private” spaces was not put on record, further distinguishing the “public” records from these “private” conversations.

The ways in which the objection to Cressy’s admission is spoken about is particularly interesting. One of the reasons for refusing Cressy’s admission is that it would “drive other students away”. This gives some insight into the ways in which the Council believed the social structure at the SAC was working. They believed that the admission of a student of another race would lead to white gentlemen not associating the College with a certain degree of respectability. It is also a distancing assertion, it was not that Buissonne and Centlivres themselves did not want the student to be admitted, but the reactions of others would show that his admission was undesirable. The importance of the SAC’s own reputation was tied to the importance of Buissonne and Centlivres protecting their own reputations, as to speak against the admission of Cressy, was, in the view of these Council members, to protect the reputation of both themselves and the College.

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<sup>40</sup> Griffiths, T. *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, (Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996), p. 211.

It is important to contextualise the decision to admit Cressy in terms of the political context of the Cape colony at the time. The opinions which are expressed by the Council members regarding this case show the ways in which these understandings of race and difference were often contested even amongst members of a similar social standing in society. Further, the fact that Cressy was admitted does not necessarily point to the fact that at this moment the Council members were agreeing to the concept of any sort of “racial equality”. What it does clearly show is a certain respect for written rules and records. The fact that the Council members in favour of the application pointed back to the meeting in which the decisions about racial access had been made is indicative of this. If the decision about allowing people of all “colours” into the College had not been made by this period, it is unclear as to whether Cressy’s application would have been successful. Indeed, it is only Jagger whose voice is heard with regards to the admission of Cressy, and even so, his reason is that one or two coloured students among so many others would not “pollute” the white student body.

The above case study has indicated two main points. The first is that the discussions which were held in “private” forums like Senate and Council meetings were often not known to the SAC public. The long debate about Cressy’s admission to the College is not reflected in the ultimate decision to admit him to the College. The case also shows the way in which “public” issues, such as the role of segregation in education, played out at the individual College level. Secondly, the case shows the way in which records were used as a way of legitimating certain kinds of knowledge, and also performed a key role in making the “private” discussions known to present researchers.

### *Appointing staff*

There are a few other examples of times in which the Council members of the SAC objected to certain appointments at the College. One good example of the kinds of discussions which

were not made public at the SAC was when there was disagreement amongst Council members about the appointment of a Prof W Logeman to teach Dutch and Modern Languages.<sup>41</sup> Logeman had been appointed by the SAC as Professor of Modern Languages in 1894, but had since moved to Victoria College.<sup>42</sup> He had not been completely inconspicuous in his career at the SAC, as about a month after his appointment, he had written to the Council asking for two full scholarships for his sons to attend the SAC. The Secretary of Council wrote back, rather disgruntled, saying that these kinds of privileges had never been granted between College and school, and that as the SAC was *the* premier College in South Africa, they could not accede to his request.<sup>43</sup>

In 1898, when Logeman applied for another job after some time away from the SAC, there was some disagreement about his appointment. Some Council members suggested his appointment, but it was vehemently argued against by Hon JH Hofmeyr, who stated that he felt “bound to record his reasons of dissent” with regard to the appointment. He stated that Logeman had not produced testimonials which reflected his teaching qualifications, that Logeman had “proved a failure in the past with not being able to teach Dutch”, “he fails to uphold discipline and is at times too strict and at other times far too familiar with students”, and “several parents to [his] knowledge have openly declared unwilling to send their children to his class”. Hofmeyr went further, saying that if Logeman was hired, it would mean a “death blow to Dutch Language at the S.A. College”.<sup>44</sup>

The fact that Hofmeyr once again points to the importance of the creation of written records indicates the way in which these records were constructed as revealing some version of the “truth”. This points back to Burton’s conception of the archive as a tool of surveillance. By

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<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, Prof W Logeman was Secretary of Senate in 1896. I assume that following this he went to teach at Victoria College, and then wanted to return. See Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 803.

<sup>42</sup> CM, 2 June 1894.

<sup>43</sup> CM, 21 July 1894.

<sup>44</sup> CM, 5 Dec 1898.

making sure that his objections were placed on the record, Hofmeyr saw to it that any complaints about the appointment were pre-empted by him. Further, the lack of appropriate records indicating Logeman's professionalism was another strike against him in Hofmeyr's eyes. This case also shows an engagement with the question of the College's reputation. By appointing someone who had a bad reputation as a teacher, the SAC's reputation would have been called into question. This once again points to the idea of the SAC as distinct from other Colleges and occupying a "special" place within the colonial Cape. The quality of teachers needed to reflect the SAC's distinctiveness.

Another similar example came in 1907, long after the admission of women as students to the College. Minutes of the Council reflect that Dr Fuller was in favour of the admission of women into professional roles at the SAC. In December of 1907, the Council held a special meeting at which the appropriateness of having a woman to teach Dutch at the SAC High School was discussed. While Dr Fuller spoke out in favour of the woman teacher in question, a Miss Krige, Mr Baxter, the headmaster of the College school at the time, stated that he "would not like to be responsible for the experiment of appointing a lady teacher as he thought that both work and discipline would suffer by such an appointment."<sup>45</sup> Dr Fuller must have presented a good case for Miss Krige, as the decision was made by Council to employ her, on a scaled salary, as a Dutch teacher. It was also communicated to Miss Krige that

it was the first time that a lady teacher had been appointed to the High School and that it was therefore somewhat of the nature of an experiment, and if it was found to be unsuitable the Committee would give her the opportunity to resign with the agreed upon three months notice.<sup>46</sup>

This case once again shows the ways in which there were "private conversations" occurring between Council, and Senate, members about what constituted proper practice for the SAC.

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<sup>45</sup> CM, 19 Dec 1907.

<sup>46</sup> CM, 19 Dec 1907.

This knowledge was not always freely passed to other role-players who were also part of the College.

This chapter has shown some of the ways in which the public and private roles of those governing the SAC intersected. The idea of reputation and the role of both “public” men, and the importance of “private” discussion, in upholding the College’s reputation is highlighted. In the decisions around particular cases involving access to the College, as well as their presence at various public events, the Council members were used as a way of legitimating the uniqueness of the College’s status within South Africa. The conversations which were put on record as showing disagreement between Council members indicate both the importance of the individual reputations of the Council members, who did not want to be questioned on where their loyalties lay on certain issues, as well as the importance of the creation of a written record which would serve as a reference for the College’s progress.

From the above example, and from the discussion of the Council and Senate meetings above it is clear that those who were working at the SAC were aware of the longevity of print, and how this tied to questions of distinctiveness and reputation. This discussion has sought to reveal the “texture” of the archive, through treating the archive as a source in itself, rather than as a holder of “facts” about the College.<sup>47</sup> What this chapter has shown is that the materiality of records makes them transcend the boundaries between the “public” and the “private” worlds at the SAC, and at UCT currently. While meetings of the governing bodies of the College were “private” spaces, the importance of having disagreement recorded in the minutes of these meetings shows the way in which individual members of staff saw their “public” reputations being linked to what was said in these “private” conversations. By using the records to reveal what was seen as “public” information and what was seen as “internal” or “private” at the College, I have shown some of the ways in which these records can answer

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<sup>47</sup> Stoler, “Colonial archives and the arts of governance”, p. 92 -100.

particular kinds of questions, but also the way in which the archive itself, with what it holds and what it does not, is a valuable source of information to a historian of institutions. The following chapter builds on the role of the SAC within “public” Cape life, indicating ways in which its physical location and space shaped the distinctions between “public” and “private” interactions at the College.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 3

### *Institutional spaces*

In this chapter, I examine some of the ways in which the physical location and space of the South African College shaped social relations which were occurring within it. By doing so, this chapter challenges the idea of the institution as a static entity. It shows the way in which institutions should be examined as products of both extremely proximate and distant political, social and cultural phenomena. In this chapter, I examine the literal “space” of the SAC, and argue that the SAC’s physical location, both in reality, and in the way in which it was imagined by those at the College, shaped social interactions which occurred at the College. Further, I suggest that the idea of “private” space being constituted by the physical boundaries of the College space does not adequately address the ways in which these boundaries were always permeable. In this sense the distinction between public and private space at the College is brought to light, as I suggest that this distinction should not be thought about as purely material.

This chapter roots the discussion of the distinctive nature of the SAC experience which was put forward in the previous chapters in the immediate location of the SAC. In the writing of a history which centres on the institutional context, the meaning of “place” is important. Foucault writes about our experience of place, stating that

we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, M. (translated by Jay Miskowicz), “Of Other Spaces”, *Diacritics*, 16(1), (1986), pp. 22-27, p. 23.

It is this conception of space, not as a “void”, but as comprising wide ranging social and material obligations, understandings, and limitations, which I seek to illustrate in my discussion of the SAC space.

Ballantyne writes about places as “knot-like conjunctures” where individual mobilities and realities of life in a place are illuminated.<sup>2</sup> The writing of institutions, and the use of institutional archives, need not be a process of writing a history of “stability and fixity”.<sup>3</sup> It is important, when using an institution as a unit of analysis in historical research, to think about “place” and “space” as constituted by multiple elements, rather than as stable concepts upon which an institutional history can be built. Massey’s work on space urges us to “recognise space as a product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny.”<sup>4</sup> In the current project, this translates into seeing the SAC as a space defined through multiple historical, political, cultural and social trajectories. Indeed, as earlier chapters have shown, the SAC was defined by a code of gendered behaviours which were deemed fitting of its pupils, by adherence to certain hierarchies within the College, and by the College’s location and interaction with the “public” world of which it formed a part.

Alan Lester’s work on imperial networks provides a useful window into the way in which space can be addressed in historical writing. In examining the way in which the British empire can be thought about using “new” imperial histories, Lester argues that space can be defined by having “multiple trajectories”—which are based on the movement of “people, objects, texts, ideas and even of rock, sediment, water, ice and air (constituting the physical geography of place at any given time)”.<sup>5</sup> While Lester is arguing in this paper about the

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<sup>2</sup> Ballantyne, T. “On place, space, and mobility in nineteenth-century New Zealand”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 45(1), (2011), pp. 50 -70, p. 61

<sup>3</sup> Ballantyne, “On place, space and mobility”, p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Massey, D. *For Space*, (Sage, London, 2005), p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Lester, “Imperial Circuits and networks”, p. 135.

importance of space and place in new imperial histories which take the idea of the “network” or “web” as a unit of analysis, his conceptualisation of space as a “juxtaposition of multiple trajectories” provides a useful way into thinking about a very specific educational space, which was defined in terms of boundaries which were as much physical as social.<sup>6</sup>

### *Space and place: mapping the SAC*

As a starting point for this chapter, it is useful to examine the physical boundaries of the College in order to illuminate the ways in which these shaped social relations at the College. Richard White, in an article about transnational histories of nature and the environment, writes that “historians have been notoriously inattentive to spatial issues”.<sup>7</sup> Although White is largely writing about the ways in which historians have overlooked the need to theorise and think about the “natural” environment, and the ways in which it shapes social relations, he also points to the fact that historians have often been too quick to only see “space” as the field in which social, political or cultural phenomena play out.<sup>8</sup> LeFebvre’s conception of space as “partially natural and partially social” is a useful way into examining the questions of space and subjecthood at the SAC.<sup>9</sup>

Eric Walker wrote about the property where the SAC was located from the 1840s.<sup>10</sup> In the 1840s, one wall was the wall of the Avenue, the path through the Company’s Gardens.<sup>11</sup> On the other side, until 1855, “beyond the rickety fence on the inner side of its property was the slave lodge, which Government saw fit to use as a House of Correction.”<sup>12</sup> While much had

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<sup>6</sup> Lester, “Imperial Circuits and networks”, p. 135.

<sup>7</sup> White, “The Nationalisation of Nature”, p. 977.

<sup>8</sup> White, “The Nationalisation of Nature”, p. 977.

<sup>9</sup> White, “The Nationalisation of Nature”, p. 979.

<sup>10</sup> Initially, the SAC was located in Long Street, and shared premises with the Orphan Chamber. The initial funding for the College came from the Prize Negro Fund. Walker wryly commented that “the black man can be found in some shape or form at the foundation of most South African institutions” (Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 4). The irony of the initial funding coming from this fund is especially evident given the discussion of race and admission in the previous chapter.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 22.

changed by the 1880s, the College's location in the heart of Cape Town, amongst historic buildings would have impacted the ways in which the students and staff interacted with the space. William Ritchie's history of the South African College describes the location of the SAC in 1899:

...that neighbourhood presented an aspect very different from its present appearance [Ritchie wrote in the 1920s]. A deep waterhouse ran down Orange Street on the edge of the College property and was often very unsavoury in the hot weather, and the streets themselves were comparatively rough and afforded plenty of material for dust when the South Easter was active.<sup>13</sup>

Ritchie's description of the College in the last year of the nineteenth century gives an impression of the ways in which sanitary, hygienic and spatial concerns would have impacted on the running of the College. Indeed Ritchie contextualises the founding of the SAC by pointing out that its beginnings in 1829 came in the same period in which the Old Somerset Hospital (1818), Commercial Exchange (1819), Public Library (1822), Royal Observatory (1829) were opened.<sup>14</sup> McKenzie argues, through an in-depth analysis of the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in the 1820s and 1830s, that "the Cape bourgeoisie demonstrated its desire to separate itself from society at large by reserving for itself an "uncontaminated" social space, secure within the patronage of the political establishment".<sup>15</sup> The founding of Cape institutions signified a rootedness in the geographical space of the Cape. Some fifty years later, the starting point for this study, the SAC was dealing with a property which was rather too small for its needs, had inadequate facilities, and often struggled to keep up with an increasing student population and their needs for increased classrooms and residential accommodation.

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<sup>13</sup> Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 393.

<sup>14</sup> Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> McKenzie, K. "The *South African Commercial Advertiser* and the making of middle-class identity in early nineteenth-century Cape Town", (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, August 1993), p. 73. See in particular chapters two and three for the discussion of the nature of the distinction between public and private space in nineteenth century Cape Town.

The SAC's location was also in an "official" space. This was due to its being surrounded by the Government House, Zoological Gardens, Old Slave Lodge and Orphanage, amongst other official buildings.<sup>16</sup> It was also close to the South African Museum, which was initially housed in the same building as the College, the Public Library and Post Office. In this sense, the SAC was being discursively located in a space which was housing the "official" colonial infrastructure. The colonial use of space in Cape Town during this period is highlighted. The presence of all of the "South African" institutions in one centralised district located this as the "official" space. In this sense, the space was "public", in its housing of the infrastructure for governance and maintenance of the Colony, but was also made private through its being the site at which official knowledge was propagated. As the previous chapters have shown, who constituted the "public" in this "official space" was based on a body of shared ideas about what it meant to be respectable and honourable in the space. In this sense, the construction of a place as "official" and "public" is to define other places as private, and unofficial, and to point to a certain public for which this space should provide.

Part of the area being an official one was also about its being an historical location as well. The Company's Gardens, across the Avenue from where the SAC was located, were a site which, according to Worden, were an "early marker of VOC authority", as it represented the Company's power and settlement in the Colony to the Company's employees.<sup>17</sup> The SAC being physically located in a space which was associated with the beginning of European settlement in the Colony added to a sense of longevity, which as later chapters will show, the SAC associated itself with.

The SAC's self-definition as a uniquely Cape institution, located within the "official" and "historical" space of Cape Town centre, also involved an imagining of what the landscape

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<sup>16</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Worden, N. "Space and Identity in VOC Cape Town", *Kronos*, 25, (1998/1999), pp. 72-87, p. 77.

beyond the College, and beyond the Cape, looked like. Reports from the *SAC Magazines* often cast the rest of South Africa, and particularly its native inhabitants, as in need of civilisation. It is particularly interesting that the few discussions of the native inhabitants of South Africa which were mentioned in the *Magazines* are in relation to the physical landscape, which casts them as natural, and uncivilised, in opposition to a cultivated landscape and “ownership” over land which was so deeply associated with the SAC’s own geographical understanding of itself. The Cape’s urban setting, therefore, was used as a measure of a certain mark of civilisation.

The cases in which the world beyond the SAC was mentioned were often in accounts of the vacations of students. These were written as much for interest, as they were for factual descriptions of the country beyond the Cape. In the *SAC Magazine* in 1900, one author expresses the way in which the landscape of South Africa was imagined. The student was writing from a visit to England and then to Edinburgh Medical School and commented that

...as we left England behind the country seemed to become more suggestive of home, the beautiful green that clothed the South of England was giving place to a shade more like that of the veld... a few hills rose up on either side of us, and there were stretches of moorland still left to nature and uncultivated.<sup>18</sup>

In opposition to the green of England, in which the culture of civilisation had tamed the natural landscape, South Africa was “left to nature and uncultivated”. Further, in this description, South Africa and Scotland are likened. This is particularly significant given the number of Scottish teachers working in South Africa during this time, many of them at the SAC. However, this distinction was one which was often more complicated than a simple binary between civilised England and uncivilised South Africa, as the *Magazines* show that the position of Cape Town was constructed as unique within South Africa.

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<sup>18</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(2), (1901), p.25.

An essay, which was read to the Debating Society, about Tembuland cast some doubt about how much Cape Town was representative of the whole of South Africa. In this essay, the author details the common misconceptions about Tembuland, as “swarm[ing] of (sic) natives, lazy and indolent, miserable and degraded”. The author goes on to assert that this was true of Pondoland or Zululand, but that there had been “careful administration”, “prohibition of liquor”, “encouragement of work” which had caused the “remnants of the tribes [to] settle down”.<sup>19</sup> While this kind of thinking is indicative of a certain “liberal” idea about black people being able to become civilised if they could become like white people, and leave their “tribe” behind, it also casts a strong opposition between the reality of life in Cape Town and the reality of life elsewhere in South Africa. Indeed, even the landscape of Tembuland is described as “a beautiful country, a land of forest and field of picturesque gorge and tumbling fall”.<sup>20</sup> The fact that Tembuland is described as a “separate country” shows its difference to Cape Town as the centre of civilisation. The picturesque landscape also serves to reinforce the idea of the land being untamed and untouched by civilisation.

While the rest of the country had picturesque landscapes, and a different relationship to the native populations, which are left out of the SAC’s descriptions of Cape Town, the SAC’s location in Cape Town meant that it was associated as much, if not more, with a British imperial world, as it was with a uniquely South African context. In this sense, the SAC was characterised by multiple, and often contradictory forces. The SAC was part of an official and historical space, and one which was seen as different to the rest of the country. The idea of the SAC as a “public” institution, therefore, was associated with a specific idea of who this public should be. The idea of the “public” institution being situated in official space suggests a distinction between insiders and outsiders at the College and between those who had access to this official space and those who did not.

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<sup>19</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4 (2), (1904), p. 1-2.

<sup>20</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4(2), (1904), p. 1-2.

### *Marginal space*

The “Avenue”, which was a lane situated between the school and the Company’s Gardens, became a site of contestation between the staff and students. As a part of an “official” and “historical” space, there were certain kinds of behaviour which were deemed appropriate in that space. However, as the Avenue neither belonged to the SAC or to the surrounding Gardens, it formed a kind of “liminal” space. The example of students’ use of the Avenue space indicates the limitations of a strictly geographical idea of institutional space. In the Senate minutes of the SAC, this marginal space became a place in which the ideas of space, status and respectability were played out. While students were required to treat their professors with respect inside the walls of the SAC, the Avenue fell outside the boundaries of the College, and therefore was a place in which social relations could be challenged. A clear example of this came in 1880, where a father of a boy, Hofmeyr, wrote a letter to the Senate, in which he asked why his son had been refused admission into the College.<sup>21</sup> The Secretary of Senate, referred to two incidents which had occurred in the Avenue, where Mr Hofmeyr’s son had been stopped by him, and the boy had given no recognition of the Senate member’s presence. When the Senate secretary called the young man in to explain his behaviour, he had refused to explain, and “was instructed to sit down and think the matter over”.<sup>22</sup> He refused to explain his conduct, and was eventually allowed by the Senate to be admitted for the matriculation examination, provided that he “observe in future the usual terms of respect to all the Professors of the College”.<sup>23</sup> The student was being asked to acknowledge the superior status of the staff member, and thus act in a manner which was appropriate to the respectable SAC student.

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<sup>21</sup> See SM, 25 Oct 1880.

<sup>22</sup> SM, 25 Oct 1880.

<sup>23</sup> SM, 25 Oct 1880.

What is interesting about this case is not that it shows a case of a student transgressing the norms of discipline within the college, but it shows the ways in which the College aimed to extend its control over the lives of the boys beyond the College walls. The boy “ignored” Professor Gill in the Avenue, which technically fell outside of the space which the College controlled. However, the Avenue as a space, according to the Senate of the SAC, necessitated certain types of social and hierarchical interactions between the students and staff. The rules of the College included “no loitering in the Avenue”.<sup>24</sup>

Another case of the “misuse” of the Avenue came in 1894, where the Janitor, a Mr Bassett, complained to the Council that there had been a “serious nuisance at the College, caused by frequenters of the Band performances in the Avenue”.<sup>25</sup> This case shows the ways in which the College was affected by “outsiders” invading a physical space which was on the boundary of its control. The Secretary of Senate wrote to the Town Clerk on the subject, who replied that the “alleged nuisance” would receive attention.<sup>26</sup> While the Council minutes do not include the outcome of this exchange, it indicates once again the permeability of the physical boundaries of the institution. The marginal space of the Avenue provides a useful insight into the negotiations around the social spaces which the College provided. While the use of the Avenue was “beyond” the control of the staff, the ways in which staff and students thought about hierarchies and the permeability of these beyond the walls of the College are indicated in the cases in which there were breaches of discipline in places which fell just beyond the control of the staff of the SAC. Particularly important is the fact that this space held currency for those who were beyond the walls of the SAC as well. As the SAC was located in a “historical” and “official” space, the use of the space for things which interfered with the teaching which the SAC was providing was likely. In this sense, the legitimisation of the

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<sup>24</sup> See, for eg, SM adopted 22 June 1885.

<sup>25</sup> CM, 2 Nov 1894.

<sup>26</sup> CM, 15 Nov 1894.

SAC's location and importance in South Africa, as being located in "official" Cape Town, also created some of the barriers to the smooth functioning of the College space. Moreover, the "official" location also necessitated the appropriate behaviour of students, as their presence in the "historical" location meant that they should act in a manner which did not call the reputation of the College into question.

Wayne Durrill argues that the Paddock was one of the sites over which there was much contestation between the SAC students and the staff. In the late 1850s and 1860s, there was some contestation over who should own the Paddock grounds, which were used by the students for sport, but in name belonged to the Governor, who used the fields as a place to graze cattle.<sup>27</sup> The paddock was adjacent to the College, and fell outside of the strict boundaries of the College staff's control. The Paddock was still a site of contestation in the later part of the century. In 1895, the Sanitary Superintendent of the Corporation sent a letter to the SAC Council saying that as the SAC now occupied the Paddock, they were to "keep the Paddock in a wholesome state". The matter was referred to Dr Fuller, a teacher and Health Officer at the SAC.<sup>28</sup> One can only guess what this "wholesome state" entailed, but the use of questions of sanitation to express ideas of respectability and honourable behaviour was one which was common throughout the period under study. This is indicative of what Maynard Swanson has described as "sanitation syndrome" in the first decade of the twentieth century at the Cape. Swanson argues that the "imagery of infectious disease as a societal metaphor...powerfully interacted with British and South African racial attitudes to influence the policies and shape the institutions of segregation".<sup>29</sup> While the example of the Paddock being kept in a wholesome state does not speak directly to the idea of segregation, it does indicate a need for cleanliness to mark the space as respectable and befitting of a "public"

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<sup>27</sup> Durrill, "Shaping a settler elite", p.229.

<sup>28</sup> CM, 9 Aug 1895.

<sup>29</sup> Swanson, M. "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909," *Journal of African History*, 18(3), (1977), pp. 387-410, p. 387.

institution like the SAC. Indeed, Bickford-Smith's work on colonial Cape Town in the late nineteenth century reinforces the conception of cleanliness and hygiene as essential components of being "respectable", in opposition to pollution, immorality and danger.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, if Ross's statement about the Cape in the period up to 1870 can be applied here as well, "respectability and gentility were manifested most clearly in material things".<sup>31</sup> Just as the inside and facade of a home needed to be clean in order to express the social position of the owner to the outside world, the SAC needed to have clean and "wholesome" grounds in order to display a particular image to the public.<sup>32</sup>

The idea of the College being a space which extended beyond the boundaries of the institution is one which came from within the College as well. The Rules of the College from 1904 reflect the need for the SAC students to behave in a respectable fashion even beyond the walls of the institution. The rule reads "students are required to abstain, whether on the College premises or not, from all conduct tending to bring discredit on the Institution."<sup>33</sup> In this sense, the way in which the staff members thought about the identity of the students was that their primary affiliation would be that of being an SAC student, and party to the distinctive educational experience which being a student there had given them. The need for the students to behave in a way in which they would not "bring discredit to the institution" meant that the students needed to respect the hierarchies which were set up in a very specific space beyond the walls of the College.

Another case in which the boundary between what constituted institutional space and what fell beyond the area of the SAC's jurisdiction was in 1914, when a letter was received from the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church on Adderley Street, which was close to the

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<sup>30</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 39, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> Rules of the SAC 1904, *SAC Calendar for 1904*, (SA "Electric" Printing and Publishing Co, Cape Town, 1904).

College's Cape Town campus. In this letter, it was stated that the students of the South African College had carved their names into the wooden pews in the church.<sup>34</sup> The College staff, or the "General Purposes Committee", a later incarnation of the "Discipline Committee", was being asked to discipline students beyond the boundaries of the College. The above examples suffice to show that the idea of the institution was not confined to one geographical space, but rather that the institution was comprised of a set of rules, regulations and hierarchies which may have arisen out of a geographic location, but were not defined by it. In this sense, the permeability of the institution and what constituted it as a space is brought into question. The above examples also show the ways in which the idea of respectability was manifested in the material location of the College, as the reputation of the College was reliant on its appearing to adhere to certain standards for its cleanly and wholesome state.

#### *Making space for women*

One of the main ways in which the spatial history of the SAC illuminates issues facing the College at the time was through the introduction of women into the College. The Council and Senate raised no obvious objections to women attending classes at the College, which was permitted from 1887. The South African College Council Report, which was presented to colonial government stated that "all the departments have been thrown open to competent applicants for admission, without distinction of sex and age".<sup>35</sup> Ten women entered the College in that year, and the Senate reported that their admission had "not only led to no practical inconvenience, but has been decidedly beneficial to the College".<sup>36</sup> However, the ways in which women, and making provision for women, was spoken about by members of

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<sup>34</sup> SM, 23 July 1914.

<sup>35</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1887* (G 23 – '88).

<sup>36</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1887* (G23 – '88). The fact that age is mentioned here is interesting, but beyond the scope of the current thesis. There were doubts about boys who were too young coming into universities without sufficient experience.

the council warrants special examination, as it shows the ways in which social and political questions were addressed through questions of space.

Much of the anxiety which arose from discussions of making provision for women came from the desire for women to be provided for separately from men. In 1898, ten years after the admission of women into the College, a letter was received from the Town Clerk, stating that “the Council are advised that in the water closets now put up no distinction of sex is provided, and that unless the same is provided within six weeks from date, in accordance with regulation no. 140, proceedings will be instituted to compel compliance”.<sup>37</sup> The fact that the Town Clerk was writing accusing the SAC of not providing sufficient and *separate* facilities for the women is indicative of broader beliefs about gendered spaces and respectability. While a gendered division of water closets is not a surprising distinction to be made, the implication of the Town Clerk writing to the College about these facilities was to bring the College’s respectability into question.

McKenzie’s work on public and private spaces in Cape Town is indicative of the ways in which “public” space was defined in gendered terms. McKenzie argues that the idea of public space was, in the first half of the nineteenth century, limited to people who owned property and had an education, “in effect restricting the public to men of a certain class”.<sup>38</sup> While this idea of the “public” was changing by the late nineteenth century, particularly in an institution like the SAC which had actively allowed women into the public space, the treatment of women was deeply linked to ideas of respectability. Not providing adequate facilities for the women would have been seen as not showing the adequate distinction between the genders thus would not have been seen as respectable behaviour.

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<sup>37</sup> CM, 27 Jan 1898.

<sup>38</sup> McKenzie, K. “‘Franklins of the Cape’: The *South African Commercial Advertiser* and the creation of a colonial public sphere, 1824-185”, *Kronos*, 25 (1998/1999), pp. 88-102, p. 90.

The former Secretary of Senate, Professor Lewis, obviously insulted at the accusation that men and women were sharing bathroom facilities, had stated that “the Ladies attending College make use of Prof. Ritchie’s house. That this arrangement is not considered a convenient one. That he is quite at a loss to understand how such a misleading and damaging statement could have been made by the Town House officials”.<sup>39</sup> The fact that this was called a “damaging statement” indicates the way in which the separation of these facilities was a matter of concern for the reputation of the individual professors at the College as well as for the College itself. Prof. Ritchie, as a distinguished member of staff, would have been worried about the accusations that he was allowing young women into his home.

The link between “sanitation” and “respectability” is made clear in the above exchange. Rather than engaging with Lewis and the Council about adequate provisions for women’s residences or hostels, the talk of water closets indicates an obsession with hygiene and cleanliness which is reflected throughout the Council minutes, as discussed in the example of the Paddock earlier. Smith writes of the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, stating that the period was characterised by constant “headline news of drains, baths, and water”.<sup>40</sup> Being able to provide adequate sanitation at the College was a way of asserting the status of the College, as poor hygiene was often associated with overcrowded conditions of poverty.<sup>41</sup> Bickford-Smith has discussed similar beliefs in the Cape at this time, with outbreaks of disease often being associated with Cape Town’s poorer communities.<sup>42</sup> Further, Collington argues that “personal cleanliness was ... a major force in the formation of the bourgeois private sphere” in Britain.<sup>43</sup> In her discussion of British colonialism in India, she argues that the British needed to adhere even more strictly to certain levels of sanitation and cleanliness

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<sup>39</sup> CM, 27 Jan 1898.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, V. *Clean: A history of personal hygiene and purity*. (Oxford University Press, New York, 2007), p. 279.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *Clean*, p. 279.

<sup>42</sup> Bickford-Smith, “Dangerous Cape Town”.

<sup>43</sup> Collington, EM. *Imperial Bodies*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001), p. 174.

in India in order to illustrate their respectability. The idea of separate public and private spaces would have held particular importance in a public, government institution which was identified with the dominant class in the Cape. Respectable behaviour, therefore, was intimately tied to geographical locations and understandings of what a “respectable” place should look like.

The intensity which is expressed in the Council minutes about providing adequate facilities for women is about more than respectability. It shows the ways in which the physical space of the SAC necessitated specific social interactions, and allowed for particular kinds of access. While women were “welcome” in classroom spaces, in which they did not need to be provided for separately, their inclusion in the College and the need for separate facilities meant that the Council members needed to address the questions of what it meant to have women at the College. This is not to say that these separations were unnecessary or that similar divisions of private and gendered spaces are not made today, but rather calls to attention the ways in which these separations were spoken about and understood.

The “official” space of Cape Town, a space of which the SAC formed part, was a masculine environment. Including women in this official space therefore needed to be treated in a way which would both maintain the respectability of the men who were involved in the College, and maintain the masculine power structures which were already in place. The legacy of Cape Town as a male-dominated environment, from its beginnings as a colonial city, was to be protected by the College. While the political context of the Cape had changed dramatically since its period of VOC rule, the sex imbalance at the Cape during that period had created what Ross has called a “male-dominated” society, both due to patriarchal norms and the over-representation of men within the population.<sup>44</sup> There were, in the mid- eighteenth-century

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<sup>44</sup> Ross, “Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope”, *Historical Reflexions* 6, (1979), pp. 421-433, p. 421.

Cape, about three times the number of men than the number of women in the port city of Cape Town.<sup>45</sup> Of course, this sex-imbalance had evened out by the period under study. The way in which power was seen as emanating from institutions which were controlled by men, however, was still a significant way in which the SAC was operating. Thus, the preoccupation with providing “space” for women was also about providing a social space for them within an institution which was part of an apparatus of patriarchal power. Including them did not mean a changing of the way in which the institution embodied these gender differences, but rather, necessitated thinking about ways to maintain this almost in spite of access for women. According to Kerber, “authority has traditionally validated itself by its distance from the feminine and from what is understood to be effeminate”.<sup>46</sup> If this was the case at the SAC, the need to redefine the boundaries of what it meant to be part of the “public” life of the College would have been especially pressing after the admission of women into the College.

Interestingly, the ways in which the women students interacted with their environment points to their own use of space as a segregator. For example, the *South African College Magazine* reported that the women, who were first admitted into the Chemistry department, all sat together in the front row in their Chemistry lectures. It seems that this deliberate separation of the men and women was done at least partly by choice by the women themselves, and reflects the ways in which social interactions and understandings of gender led to the use of the physical space in particular ways. The space also necessitated certain kinds of gendered behaviours for men and women. For example, a woman who was in one of the first Chemistry classes to admit women, wrote a letter to the *SAC Magazine* in which she stated that the women in the class

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<sup>45</sup> Ross claims that there were 344 men for every 100 women at the Cape in 1749. Ross, “Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery”, p. 421.

<sup>46</sup> Kerber, K. “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History”, *Journal of American History*, 75(1), (1988), pp. 9-39, p. 32.

are, of course, aware that it is pure politeness which makes Dr Hahn let them have first go when the various chemical substances are passed around for examination. But they might point out that they would still more appreciate his courtesy if he could give them beforehand some idea of what the things are going to smell like – or better still, if he could let things like the Malmesbury Water and the NH<sub>3</sub> compounds start at the other end of the front bench, so that the left-hand end could observe their effect on the other front benchers and so be warned in time for their own turn. For it is not the scents themselves they object to so much as the unexpectedness of them; it is difficult to preserve a composed and ladylike demeanour upon meeting for the first time some of the odours which sweeten the path of the earnest student, unless one is warned beforehand to give them a cautious reception.<sup>47</sup>

This example shows the way in which women understood that their being in this public space also required them to behave like “ladies” in particular ways. Their own use of space, in their sitting together in the front row, whether this was imposed or chosen, indicates the way in which the space was used to underscore and reinforce gender differences between men and women at the College.

Margaret Levyns, who was both a student and staff member in the Biology Department at the SAC, speaks about the separation of men and women at the SAC when she first entered the College as a student in 1908. In her discussion of life as a student, she mentions the ways in which retiring spaces for men and women were provided separately. “In those days,” she writes, “women students had two common rooms on the upper floor of Betram Place.”<sup>48</sup> The gendered nature of the College spaces would have influenced the ways in which male and female students interacted with one another, and indeed the patriarchal power structures, and student interactions, at the College reflect this.

*College House, illness and adequate provision*

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<sup>47</sup> SAC Magazine, 4(2), (1904), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Levyns, M. *A Botanist's Memoirs*, (Privately Published by Department of Botany, UCT, 1968), p.3.

When the South African College began, it provided both primary and secondary education as well as higher education for the purposes of the degrees which were conferred by the University of the Cape of Good Hope, founded in 1873. However, from the 1880s, there was an increasing drive within the College to separate the school and College facilities. What this meant was a reconceptualisation of the space as one which was specifically for higher education from 1900 onwards. In 1880, Dr Langham Dale, Superintendent of Education, put forward a scheme in which the premises of the SAC would be increased, arguing that “without the additional facilities proposed, it will be difficult to maintain, and impossible to increase, the efficiency of the Institution.”<sup>49</sup> In 1881, the report of the SAC Council to the government stated that it was important for the school to be “[removed]” from the College grounds, and in 1896, new buildings, including Rosedale college were built at the campus in Orange street which allowed for the increase in student numbers following this.<sup>50</sup> The separation of school and college work was finally made in June 1900, which according to the Report of the SAC Council, allowed the Professors to “devote much more attention to the higher work and to effect a separation between the senior and junior B.A. classes, greatly to the improvement of work done by the students.”<sup>51</sup>

An important aspect of this separation was how it changed the idea of the space from a school to a College, which did mean a reimagining of the role of teachers, parents and students within the space. One way in which this played out was in the discussions about where students were permitted to live while attending the SAC. This once again brings to light questions about the physical and social boundaries of the SAC. The discussions about the staff of the SAC acting in *loco parentis* for the College students show that the conception of

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<sup>49</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1880.* (G 31 – ‘81).

<sup>50</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1881, 1896.* (G81 – ‘82; G29 – ‘97).

<sup>51</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1900,* (G 16 – 1901).

education as more than simply that which occurred within the walls of the College. Again, this points to a redefinition of what the “institution” was.

According to Durrill, until the 1860s, most of the College students had lived with their parents in Cape Town. Following this, more and more students were sent from other South African towns to the College. Durrill offers no explanation for this, besides the fact that the Cape colony was expanding. It is quite possible that this change was about more than simply the greater number of people in the colony. Indeed, the University of the Cape of Good Hope was situated in the Cape, and in this period, greater emphasis was being laid on the importance of higher education for respectable men.<sup>52</sup> Senate minutes from 1880 reflect the fact that the SAC was struggling to house all of its students in the “very scanty boarding accommodation” which it had on offer.<sup>53</sup> This meant that from the beginning of the College, in spite of pleas to the Council and to colonial society for funding for boarding accommodation, many of the College’s students had to stay in local boarding houses which were not directly affiliated with the College. The rules of the College from 1885 stated that if students were not staying at College house, they had to stay in accommodation which had been approved of by their parents or guardian.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, the institutional space was extended beyond the College into the domestic lives of the students, blurring the distinction between the “public” College and the “private” lives of students.

A number of complaints were made to the Council in the first decades of the twentieth century which argued that the College House facilities were inadequate. In 1913, the facilities were so oversubscribed that the Registrar of the College had to write to the Professors asking for them to take in students in their homes.<sup>55</sup> In 1905, when the Council was seeking new

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<sup>52</sup> And indeed, even before this period, being a “public” man was often associated with being “educated”. See McKenzie, “Franklins of the Cape”, p. 90.

<sup>53</sup> SM, 21 June 1880

<sup>54</sup> *SAC Calendar for 1895/6*.

<sup>55</sup> CM, 20 Feb 1913.

wardens for College House, Professor Loveday wrote that he refused the position of warden as he “regarded the arrangements of College House as so unsuited to the purpose of a College residence that he regretted that he must refuse the appointment.”<sup>56</sup> In this sense, the physical space of the SAC Boarding Houses was constraining the types of experiences which the students could have. If they were to stay in College House, the kinds of control which the authorities at the College could inflict on them was altogether different to the kinds of control extended to those who stayed in residences which had only been approved by their parents.

An interesting case which shows the ways in which the College space was completely permeable to the realities of life in Cape Town, came about in 1901, at the time of the plague outbreaks in Cape Town. The College Council reported that rats had been found in Jagersfontein House, which adjoined College House.<sup>57</sup> “Bacteriological examination” had been done on said rats, and it was found that they had “suffered from undoubted plague”.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the Medical Officer who had inspected the residence and found the rats also found that the infirmary at the College was unsuitable. In a special meeting which was called in July 1901, College House was closed by the Chairman of Council, Rev JM Russell, as the “Plague Prevention Authorities” had found two dead rats, and were therefore closing College House to the students.<sup>59</sup> What this meant was that when the students returned from their mid-year vacation, they had to be put up in boarding houses, one of which was in Gardens, close to the college premises, while the other was in Kalk Bay. The students returned to College House a month later, after the Council had decided that they could not afford to construct

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<sup>56</sup> CM, 20 Jan 1905.

<sup>57</sup> CM, 19 July 1901. Importantly, this took place in the year of bubonic plague outbreaks in Cape Town, and thus shows the response of the Council to a threat coming from beyond their sphere of influence. For a discussion of the outbreak and of the sanitation syndrome at the Cape between 1900 and 1909, see Swanson, “The Sanitation Syndrome”.

<sup>58</sup> CM, 19 July 1901. The Medical Officer had made a report “condemning the laundry and outhouses which are built of corrugated iron”. It is interesting that the word “condemning” has been used, as it speaks to the severity of cases like this, and almost criminalises the laundry and outhouses themselves.

<sup>59</sup> CM, 26 July 1901.

better washrooms and laundries, the current ones being made out of corrugated iron, due to the “heavy prices in building at present”.<sup>60</sup>

The case of students having to move out of College House due to the plague in Cape Town again points to the ways in which in spite of the fact that the institution was in a process of negotiating its control over the students and their whereabouts, the College, and the life of the students at the College were still subject to local concerns. The connection between sanitation and respectability is once again pointed to in this example, as the shame of having rats found in the College House buildings caused the Council to act quickly on the account of various “sanitary” professionals, including the Plague Prevention Authorities, Medical officers, and a doctor called “Dr Gregory”.<sup>61</sup> Further, the need to move the students away from the contaminated area shows the ways in which the College saw their role as one of parenting the students. It was never considered that the students should find their own accommodation, or that the authorities’ warnings should not be heeded.

At the SAC, the institutional “control” over the meaning of these spaces is challenged through their peopling with students. Jane Hamlett examines the “material culture of everyday life” of students at Royal Holloway, and Oxford and Cambridge in the last decades of the nineteenth century and provides a useful example of how the material culture of student life can be used in order to make sense of student experience.<sup>62</sup> While the article relies on photographs of student rooms and furnishings, it provides a useful way into thinking about how space can structure social relations. The article examines the way in which the institutional contexts of these three College environments shaped the way in which student

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<sup>60</sup> CM, 23 Aug 1901.

<sup>61</sup> CM, 19 July 1901.

<sup>62</sup> Hamlett, J. “‘Nicely Feminine, Yet Learned’: Student Rooms at Royal Holloway and the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain”, *Women's History Review*, 15(1), pp. 137-161.

rooms were furnished, but also shows how this did not stop students from using the spaces in unique and individual ways.

Hamlett's focus on the individuality of the students within the constrained environments in which they were living is a useful way of thinking through how the boundaries of the SAC would have operated. While the staff at the College were seeking to maintain the reputation of the institution through policing the movement of students when they were not on the College premises, there were aspects of student life which they could not control. Part of this were instances like the plague which effected Cape Town more generally, other examples were when students behaved in ways which were not seen as befitting of their position in society, as in some of the examples above. In this sense, painting a picture in which students were constrained by what it meant to be educated within an "official", "public" institution is misleading.

The focus here on where students stayed once again shapes the kinds of experiences which students would have had of College life. For example, the minutes of the Council of the SAC, initiation practices are only brought into question on two occasions. The first refers obliquely to a letter written by the Registrar to the Council in 1906, in which it seems that he wanted initiation ceremonies to be better controlled, and he thanked the Council for their support in the matter, and stated that their decision was "accepted by the Students in a spirit which left minimum discontent behind."<sup>63</sup> The second case which is referred to is from the following year, which seems odd given that initiation practices had been under discussion in Council the previous year. In April 1907, the College House Committee met to discuss a letter which had been received from a student, Mr C Clemen, "complaining of the treatment he received during the early part of the Term at College House". The council decided to call the Warden of College House in to meet with them, as well as the head of the Students' House

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<sup>63</sup> CM, 20 April 1906.

Committee. It was resolved at the meeting that students were not to continue with these initiation ceremonies, and that the Council should, at the beginning of each year, bring this rule to the attention of the students.<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that these initiation practices were not happening informally or outside the knowledge of the College authorities, but rather that the experiences of student life at the College would have been influenced by the access which they had to these residential spaces.

The difference between what constituted public and private space at the College, therefore, was more complicated than simply the line between the external boundaries of the College and the “public” space of Cape Town where the College was situated. The movement of people, in particular, across and through these boundaries indicates the permeability of this institutional space. The implications of the above discussion for writing the history of an institution like the SAC is that the College should be understood as constituted by multiple factors beyond simply an “ethos” or set of rules which were directly seen to reflect what the College space meant. In this chapter, I have shown some of the ways in which the physical space of the SAC shaped social relations, and indeed, how social relations shaped the physical space. This chapter has “set the scene” spatially. Through showing just some of the ways in which the boundaries of the SAC were undefined, and were negotiated in different ways by different members of the College, a new understanding of what the institution meant is put forward. It is with this idea of the College space as one with “multiple trajectories” which I will take forward in the following chapter, as I situate the SAC in its South African context.

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<sup>64</sup> CM, 17 April 1907, 23 May 1907.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Traditions of tolerance: the “South African” College*

In an address to the Debating Society at the SAC, the Reverend Bender reflected on what it meant to be a *South African* student, saying that it was not

to mean only a gold nugget and a diamond ring for each of its citizens. You want your country to be universally acknowledged as great by reason of its loyal devotion to and consistent exemplification of the highest traditions of the Empire of which it forms an integral part; by reason of its enlightened and widespread culture and humanity arising from the exalted state of its civilisation and the perfect justice of its laws. In fine, you want its national ideal to be one that shall be worthy of its associations and its possibilities and of the united and best and fullest energies of its people.<sup>1</sup>

This extract from Bender’s address gives a sense of the kinds of values that the SAC was trying to instil in their students. The uniqueness of South Africa’s people was expressed through its relationship to the British Empire. The individual reputation of South Africa needed to match that of the other British colonies, as South Africa formed an “integral” part of the Empire. While South Africa was a land of opportunities, the desire for individual achievement was less important than the uniting of South Africa’s people. The role of the South African student was to build up the nation to the point that it reflected the “highest traditions of Empire”.

In this chapter, I examine the “tradition” of tolerance at the College, examining the discourse of racial and religious tolerance which the College was seeking to promote, particularly in the period after the South African War.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the idea of “racial tolerance” was that of

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<sup>1</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p.7 -9.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to mention here that when I discuss “religious tolerance” in this chapter, it is with an awareness that this had a different meaning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Cape. “Religious tolerance” was not the same as secularism. Importantly, where this discourse is mobilised it has to do with the different Christian traditions which were prevalent at the College. Most likely, there would have been students mainly from Anglican and Dutch Reformed religious backgrounds. See Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 107, who argues that by the mid-nineteenth century many of the leading merchants in Cape Town were Anglican. The records of the SAC show only fleeting mention of students of Jewish (or other religious) backgrounds, although the list of graduates from the period suggest that many of them were of Jewish backgrounds or descent. In terms

Dutch and British equality in the College space.<sup>3</sup> The “ideal” South African College student in the period under study was thought and spoken about as a white male. In light of the changes in South Africa, the SAC’s relationship to “British-ness” and to “South African-ness” is discussed. The SAC was constructed as a “public” institution, but this “public-ness” was carefully defined in relation to a changing South Africa. This chapter seeks to ask which “public” the SAC was in fact providing for, in terms of the way in which their institutional system structured power relations between different identity groups at the College.

The SAC constructed itself as a “public” institution in different ways. The first, as mentioned previously, was through the active role of its Council members in “public” life at the Cape. The second was through its “open” admissions policies from the 1880s onwards. However, as the previous chapters have shown, the definition of who the “public” the College was providing for changed over time. An examination of the discourse of racial and religious tolerance shows up some of the ways in which the College was responding to changes within the context of South Africa. Moreover, this discussion points to the salience of concepts like reputation and status for the institution as well as for the students and staff that it served.

Two main events in the first decade of the twentieth century, namely the end of the South African War, and the formation of the South African Union, shaped the ways in which the SAC was speaking about racial tolerance at the College. While these events were not always directly referenced in the *SAC Magazines* or Council minutes, the promotion of racial tolerance at public events shows the ways in which the SAC was responding to changes in its

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of the environment of “religious tolerance”, the SAC did require students to attend prayers, thus engaging in some religious activity, but the College was not funded by a religious body, and did not claim to be affiliated (openly) with any one religious doctrine. This was in contrast to many other schools which were funded by religious bodies. For a list of graduates, see Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 805-904.

<sup>3</sup> According to Dubow, who draws on the work of Garson, using the term “English-speaking” South African to describe this group in the late nineteenth century is anachronistic. The primary identity-marker, he argues, for this group was an affiliation to Empire. Similarly, the term “Boer” or “Dutch” is more appropriate than the term “Afrikaner”. See Dubow, “Colonial Nationalism, the Milner Kindergarten and the Rise of “South Africanism”, 1902-10”, *History Workshop Journal*, 43, (1997), pp. 53-85, p. 62.

environment.<sup>4</sup> Both of these events required a rethinking of what it meant to be Dutch or British in South Africa, but also what it meant to be a South African citizen in an imperial context.

Dubow argues that in the first decade of the twentieth century there emerged an “inclusive form of patriotism” which both white English and Afrikaans speakers could subscribe to.<sup>5</sup> It was also a form of patriotism which “was sufficiently capacious to reconcile local nationalisms with continued membership of the British Empire”.<sup>6</sup> This growing sense of the individuality of the country within a British colonial framework is what Eddy and Schreuder have discussed in their work on “colonial nationalism”.<sup>7</sup> They argue that colonial nationalism comprised of a “civic sense of ideal citizenship” which was both “inclusionist” in terms of its populism, but also “exclusionist” in terms of its neglect of the citizenship of indigenous people.<sup>8</sup> These ideas about the creation of a specifically South African identity within the British Empire have been used as a way of analysing the discourse of racial tolerance which was often present in the *SAC Magazines* in the period under study. Further, Dubow’s work on the institutional context of South Africa, in terms of the creation of “public” institutions has been used as a way of thinking about how institutions can, and did, structure social relations between Dutch and British people in particular ways.<sup>9</sup> While the SAC had ostensibly been providing for the South African public in the period before the South African War, the period after the War saw a redefinition of who this public should be. In particular, the idea that both British and Dutch should be treated as equals within the College space is one which emerges strongly in the records of the SAC.

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<sup>4</sup> They were directly referenced at times, both in the *SAC Magazines* and in Council Minutes, although the latter were usually recording “logistical” decisions surrounding these events.

<sup>5</sup> Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 162.

<sup>6</sup> Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Eddy and Schreuder (eds.), *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*. See in particular, “Introduction: Colonies into New Nations”, pp. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup> Eddy and Schreuder, “Introduction”, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*.

### *The idea of a “public” College*

In the discussion of who the “public” which the SAC was providing for was, it is important to discuss the ways in which the SAC was constructing itself as a “public” institution, especially in light of global educational trends in public higher education. In 1887, the SAC was “thrown open” to the “public” after the admission of women students into the Chemistry Department. The Report of the Council of the SAC stated that

[d]uring the present year all the departments have been thrown open to competent applicants for admission, without distinction of sex or age. Ten lady Students have availed themselves of this privilege; and the Senate reports that their admission has not only led to no practical inconvenience, but has been decidedly beneficial to the College. It may be mentioned also, as a sign of the times, that more than one gentleman of ripe years has qualified himself as a gold assayer.<sup>10</sup>

While the College was being run using government funding, and was a site where, by the first decade of the twentieth century at least, ostensibly all people who had passed an entrance examination should have had equal access to the space, the records of the College show some of the ways in which access to the College was limited and less “public” than it claimed to be.<sup>11</sup> In particular, as this chapter shows, the idea of “Englishness” was central to the way in which the SAC was defining itself, and to the way in which it was seen beyond its walls. What this meant was that even though all competent applicants should have been allowed into the College, there were ways of interacting with that space which meant that it was often less “public” than it claimed to be, as it constructed itself in relation to Empire.

John Aubrey Douglass has discussed the idea of “social access” to higher education in the American context, looking particularly at the creation of a public university in California. Douglass argues that public American colleges which were established after the 1860s

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<sup>10</sup> *Report of the SAC Council, 1887* (G23 – ’88).

<sup>11</sup> The discussion of the case of Harold Cressy in chapter 2 is one example of this limited approach to “public” access.

“devised a *social contract* that included the profoundly progressive idea that any citizen who met a prescribed set of largely academic conditions would gain entrance to their state university”.<sup>12</sup> He goes further to say that America’s public universities were “conceived, funded and developed as tools of socioeconomic engineering...”<sup>13</sup> His description of these public institutions includes the idea that they were as much, if not more, about the creation of “progressive and productive society” as they were about the individual edification of students. The open education system, which did not “formally” discriminate in terms of social background, class and religion, was seen as an agent of change in American society.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to stress that these “public” universities were making a great change from their private predecessors, which according to Douglass, had used “sectarian and racial, and sometimes social caste, criteria to exclude groups.”<sup>15</sup> The Oxbridge model, which was associated with the education of the elite, had a history of preferential access based on religion and class, and also saw to it that all students were housed in colleges on the campuses.<sup>16</sup> The emerging “public” universities, by contrast, were often open to all academically qualified members of a society and did not require students to live on campus.

The declaration of the “public” nature of the SAC came about contemporaneously to the opening of public universities in America, which according to Douglass began to occur by the 1860s, and in Australia from the 1850s. Of course, the SAC did not yet have status as a university, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. However, it does show an engagement with global educational trends. This engagement, however, should not be over-emphasised, as the nature of Cape society, and the political backgrounds of many of the

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<sup>12</sup> Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, p. 6 quoted in Horne and Sherington, “Extending the educational franchise”, p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Douglass, *The Conditions for Admission*, p. 53.

members of the SAC Council did mean that there were often localised political views being espoused through the institution in this period.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, in Britain by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the idea of education for a more general public, one not defined by religious or class-based criteria was holding increasing currency.<sup>18</sup> It is in the context of the creation of these public universities, in for example, America and Australia that the SAC Council decided to open their institution as “public”.<sup>19</sup> However, the challenges that this “social access” posed in a South African context were unique, and led to the defining of SAC gentleman in specific terms which sought to protect the elite reputation of the institution.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Religious and racial tolerance: the “public” at the SAC*

Horne and Sherington, in a discussion of university education from the 1850s to the 1890s in Australia, examine, in their words, “which ‘publics’ were, in fact, participating in the public education system.”<sup>21</sup> What becomes clear in the records of the SAC is that the vision of the College was one which would allow for nation-building between the two white “races”, as they are referred to in the records, Dutch and British South Africans. In this sense, the public

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<sup>17</sup> In particular, as discussed elsewhere, the idea of who this “public” to be given “social access” to the College was, was understood in racialised terms. Decisions about the admission of black and coloured students were, at times, disguised as questions of whether the SAC environment was suited to the needs of the individual student. See my discussion of this in chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> Horne, J. and Sherington, G. *Sydney, the making of a public university*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the article written by John Edgar in *The State* which deals with the question of the formation of a national teaching university points to Canada and Australia as examples to be followed by South Africa. Edgar writes that “if South Africa is to move with the times and to keep abreast of the other great self-governing colonies like Canada and Australia, she must equip her university on a scale equal to theirs.” The sense of colonial nationalism is clear here – South Africa could prove her worth within the British Empire through showing the presence of well-equipped institutions. Edgar also writes that MacGill University in Canada should be the benchmark for which South Africa should aim. Edgar, J. “The Case for a National University”, *The State*, 4(1), (July 1910), (Cape Town, The Central News Agency, Printed by Cape Times Limited), pp. 19 – 30, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> The idea of “open-ness” and “public” access was used as a discursive device in order for the SAC to maintain its own reputation. While the idea of anyone being able to attend the College and the reality of the restricted access were somewhat different, what allowed the SAC to maintain this “public” and “tolerant” rhetoric surrounding its admissions policies was the fact that the College was not receiving applications from many black or coloured students. This is part of the reason that the names of Abdullah Abdurahman and Harold Cressy are so well known. In this sense, the mobilisation of the rhetoric of racial tolerance sought to protect the position of white Capetonians.

<sup>21</sup> Horne and Sherington, “Extending the Educational franchise”, p. 211.

for which the SAC was primarily promoting itself was one made up of white men, of English and Dutch backgrounds. However, the *SAC Magazines* also reflected a strong sense of attachment to the British Empire, and the idea of Englishness. The tensions between the idea of a British colonial public institution and the provision of higher education for both English and Dutch students at the College are important in understanding what kind of students, and citizens, the SAC was aiming to produce.

One of the important traditions, and a hallmark of public education, which the SAC drew upon was that of “religious tolerance”. In an environment in which religious education had been dominant, the idea of “religious tolerance” at the SAC was important. According to Adhikari, the changing nature of education in the Cape meant that particularly after the passing of the School Board Act in 1905, the number of white children in mission schools dropped from five thousand in the late nineteenth century to just one hundred and seventy five in 1912.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the SAC’s open declaration of its religiously tolerant policies would have been particularly important, particularly before 1905, when many white children were educated in mission schools. Although many people were still religious, the government funding to religious bodies and institutions had been reduced during this period. According to Ross, in 1875 all government funding to ministers was removed, such that religious bodies were primarily funded from public donations in the period following this.<sup>23</sup>

A number of cases suggest that in a context of multiple religious traditions and beliefs, it was often difficult to exclude all religious instruction from life at the SAC. In the period under study, educational facilities were often funded by religious bodies. In 1880, for example, the Senate put on record that Council should be informed about “the increasing number of schools in town and country, which have the strong support of religious bodies, and to point

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<sup>22</sup> Adhikari, “Coloured Identity and the Politics of Coloured Education”, p. 111, footnote 38.

<sup>23</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 106-7.

out that while the S. African College enjoys no such support and is provided with very scanty boarding accommodation” the colonial public should know that they were at an educational advantage by sending their children to the SAC, and should thus make financial contributions to it.<sup>24</sup> In this sense, part of the way in which the SAC was defining itself as different from other Cape schools was through its “secular” instruction.

In spite of the fact that the SAC was constructing itself as a space which was not affiliated with any one religious tradition, it was in the rules of the College that all students should attend morning prayers, unless they were exempted by the Conscience Clause.<sup>25</sup> These rules were amended in the first years of the new century, so that if students were absent from prayers without the permission of College officials, they were to attend Saturday detention.<sup>26</sup> Ross argues that in the period prior to this, “church membership reflected social status”, and being able to donate money to the church would further entrench a man’s status.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the inclusion of prayers in the SAC during this period is indicative of a need to maintain a certain status and reputation for the College. In 1897, Reverend Bender wrote to the Senate to ask permission to teach Bible classes there. Bender wrote that the classes would be exclusively for “Literary study of the Bible” and that they would be “conducted entirely without reference to theological questions. Attendance will be voluntary on the part of students and no fee be charged for the course.”<sup>28</sup> Permission was granted for Bender to give these lectures by the Council. What is important here is that the Council needed to maintain a space which was not affiliated with one religious tradition in order to keep the atmosphere of a professional, public institution. Teaching the Bible in a “literary” manner was a way of

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<sup>24</sup> SM, 21 June 1880.

<sup>25</sup> College rules –adopted by the Senate in 1885, SM 22 June 1885.

<sup>26</sup> See *SAC Calendar for 1905*, (SA “Electric” Printing and Publishing Co, Cape Town, 1905).

<sup>27</sup> Ross, *Status and Respectability*, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> CM, 4 Dec 1897. Bender’s assertion that he was not going to deal with “theological” questions could also be due to the fact that he was Jewish and working within a predominantly Christian context.

protecting the “secular” status of the SAC, while having “theological” study of the Bible would have been associated with religious instruction.

The religious affairs of the students do not seem to have been a matter of much interest for the Council or Senate, besides the students’ attendance at morning prayers. The attendance at prayers would have been as much about the idea of “respectability” and being upstanding moral citizens as it would have been about having any religious feeling, particularly in a religious society like the Cape at this time.<sup>29</sup> Attendance at morning prayers would also have involved an enactment of a ritual behaviour which, although it may not have inspired any religious feeling in the students, would have provided some sense of solidarity. What was important, throughout the SAC’s history, it seems, was that the SAC portrayed an image to the outside world as an institution which welcomed religious tolerance. In 1902, the *SAC Magazine* printed the Commemoration Day speech which was made by the Mayor of Cape Town that year. In this speech the mayor stated that

...we can say with truth that it [the SAC] is one of the oldest Colonial institutions of its kind within the present limits of the British Empire. The circumstances under which it was founded 73 years ago, by the practically united efforts of the people of this city and neighbourhood, were an almost prophetic indication of the broad lines of racial amity and religious tolerance along which its development has ever since proceeded.<sup>30</sup>

This quotation shows the way in which, for the Mayor at least, the SAC was perceived as a uniting force, and one which showed no racial or religious discrimination. The example of having an institution without any open religious affiliations, which was open to the public, shows a significant break with the Oxbridge model of education before this period, and indeed, some identification with the work of “public” universities or colleges in other

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<sup>29</sup> There has been little work done on the religious traditions which were present amongst the white population at the Cape during this period, besides those which refer to missionary activity. I am therefore assuming, after an in-depth reading of the sources at hand, that there was a strong Christian tradition present at the Cape.

<sup>30</sup> Commemoration day speech by mayor in *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 5.

colonial settings. In this sense, the idea of higher education being completely entwined with British imperial designs is challenged. The SAC was in a position in which it needed to respond to the social and political realities of its context. In a country with a limited white population, discriminating on the basis of religion would have caused an unnecessary barrier to the success of the institution.

The *idea* of racial and religious tolerance as one of the founding principles of the SAC was one which the staff and students of the SAC drew on in order to bolster the reputation of the College as a national institution. For example, in 1908, a Commemoration Day speech by Ritchie mentioned the fact that when the SAC started there was an opening ceremony in which there were church services both in Dutch Reformed and English traditions, and in both languages. In this sense, the “founding myth” of the SAC was one of racial tolerance, and constructing a space in which both dominant groups in South Africa were able to practice their religions. Ritchie’s speech described this service, saying “You will observe that English Churchman and Dutch Reformed minister meet in friendly intercourse, preach from the same pulpit to the same congregation, and united in giving their united blessing to the infant institution...”<sup>31</sup> Of course, there was no way that Ritchie, or any of the other staff could have been at this opening ceremony, which occurred about eighty years previously. The idea of racial tolerance was therefore a “founding myth” for the College, which formed a large part of the way in which those at the SAC understood what constituted the essence of what the College space represented. However, the speech shows that the foundations of the SAC lay in the idea of racial tolerance, and that the current challenges faced by the SAC in the period following the South African War, and in the lead up to the formation of Union, were ones which had been dealt with at the College for the century preceding this. In this sense, the racial tensions which were being experienced in South Africa at this time were normalised by

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<sup>31</sup> SAC Magazine, 9(4), (1908), p. 2-3.

the College, as Ritchie showed that since the beginning of the College's history, it had provided the space for both English and Dutch people and religions to flourish.

Partly, the tradition of racial tolerance which the SAC was drawing on was based on fact. Dubow discusses the formation of the SAC in the late 1820s, stating that it did initially attract many Dutch and English scholars, and that it was "conceived as a local institution, it functioned as an embryonic stem-cell, thickening the tissues of colonial nationalism".<sup>32</sup> However, Dubow argues that the College with the other "South African" institutions, including the Museum, Observatory and Library started to create the dominant white and English-speaking class in the Cape. These institutions, he argues, were "guided by the spirit of improvement, civic virtue, scientific enquiry, and reasoned debate that marked the emergence of an increasingly confident and predominantly English-speaking middle class..."<sup>33</sup> Thus, while the SAC was creating a space in which both English and Dutch professors were able to teach, it was also linked into a network of professionals who were often drawn from British immigrants. In this sense, the mobilisation of the idea of racial tolerance at the SAC in the period after the Anglo-Boer war was drawing on a glorified past in which there was "professional" exchange between Dutch and British South Africans, but which was tempered by a network of British institutional practices and cultural dominance.

#### *Racial tolerance in a "British" institution?*

The SAC was, both before and during this period, constructing a specific colonial and British identity for itself. This was not seen as oppositional to the discourse of racial tolerance at the College, but rather as an identity for the College which was both broader than, and incorporating of, the discourse of racial tolerance. The idea of "Britishness" as associated with manners and civility, especially in colonial contexts, where the idea of difference is

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<sup>32</sup> Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, p. 44.

increasingly confronting is raised in the context of the SAC. The “mannered” British institution could allow the Dutch students to attend the College, as long as they were aware of their inclusion in what was essentially a British space. Bickford-Smith’s work on Englishness and ethnicity in the Cape Town context provides a useful context in which the “Englishness” of the SAC can be understood. Bickford-Smith argues that

Englishness then, as with any ethnicity, involved relationships with others. For Cape Town’s English speaking bourgeoisie this relationship was to be one of dominance. Thus, the ‘colonisation’ of those ‘others’, the imposition of English values, became part and parcel of the achievement of English hegemony in the city...<sup>34</sup>

The discussion of appropriate behaviour for students at the SAC in a previous chapter has shown the ways in which the ideas of honour and reputation were key for the students at the College. The discourse of racial and religious tolerance were an institutional embodiment of these values. The ideas of status and reputation for the College were, particularly before and during the South African War, linked with the idea of “Englishness”.

The College’s status as an English institution is expressed in the *SAC Magazines* where the Royal Visits to the College are discussed. In 1901, the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall, (Prince George and his wife May), visited the College, and a function was held at which a speech was given by Russell, the Chairman of the Council at the time.<sup>35</sup> The speech expressed the devotion of the South African College to the throne, and the sadness at the recent death of Queen Victoria. Russell went on to state that

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<sup>34</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> On the Royal Tour to South Africa in 1901 see Buckner, P. “The Royal Tour of 1901 and the creation of Imperial identity in South Africa”, *South African Historical Journal*, 41(1999), pp. 324-348.

We heartily trust that Your Royal Highnesses may ever look back with pleasure and interest to your visit. We are convinced that it will have a far reaching influence in strengthening the union of hearts which so happily exists between the widely sundered portions of the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

According to Buckner, the tour was organised partly with the aim of visiting the colonies which were involved in the South African war. In this sense, the role of the SAC in this nation-building exercise is highlighted. Having held this event at the SAC which was at this time building on its “old” tradition of racial tolerance firmly placed the College within the Empire, and constructed it as loyal to the crown. In this sense, the idea of racial tolerance was not necessarily, in the vision of the College, about the equality of the races, but about their equality within a British system. The respect for the government, and for the empire, was, of course, something that the SAC would have been compelled to do as a “public” institution. However, this expression of imperial identity for the College would have sent a strong message about its relationship to Englishness and Dutch status at the Cape in this time.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the SAC was expressing its “public” image as located within the discursive space of the British Empire at this “public” event.

The *SAC Magazine*, in 1901, the time of the visit of the Royals to the College, reprinted some of the reporting which had been printed in the *Cape Argus* at the time of a Royal Visit to the College in 1881. Princes George and Edward had visited the College in 1881, and judging from the reporting which the *SAC Magazine* reprinted from the *Cape Argus*, this was an important event for the College. Once again, the reprinting of this information points to the fact that particularly in the period after the South African war, the SAC was attempting to construct the racial difference both as normal and also as a barrier which could be, and had been, overcome in the College space for the entire history of the College. The *Magazine*

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<sup>36</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(4), (1901), p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> It is notable that in 1902, the Prince Wales Chair of History was founded. In this sense, the relationship of the College to its imperial context, even in the period after the South African War should not be overlooked. See Nasson, B. “Cape or Cairo? University History on the African Continent”, *History Workshop Journal*, 55, (2003), pp. 192-196, p. 192.

reprinted an extract from the speech which Professor Gill gave to the Princes in 1881, which stated that

We are not all of one nationality, but we are from one common stock; the great race from which we derive the best portion of our language, and I think I must add, the best of our national characteristics – the great race that gave us, by your Royal grandfather, a prince, not in name only, but in every quality that can adorn a man, acknowledged by the common judgement of the English people (and there can be no severer test) to be in all respects a worthy partner of England's Queen.<sup>38</sup>

This speech expresses clearly the feelings which the SAC was fostering about racial tolerance at the College. The Royal Grandfather who is referred to in this speech is Prince Albert, who was the German husband of Queen Victoria. The speech situates the origins of the Dutch and British at the SAC within the web of superior European civilisation and shows that the German race was as civilised as the British. In this sense, the traditional aspect of the tolerance which the SAC was seeking to promote, particularly in the first decade of the twentieth century, was rooted in the history of the College. By reprinting an article from 1881, the SAC was seeking to indicate to a country which was experiencing a war, that the SAC had always been a space in which all “Europeans” were welcome. The SAC was attempting to reflect its longevity within South Africa, as it showed that tolerance had been one principle which had been common at the College throughout its history. The Royal family, then, provided a model for the functioning of the College. If the two great European civilisations could be joined in matrimony, the European students at the College could meet as equals within the space.

Other articles in the *Magazine*, which were written by students, reflect the feeling that the College students would identify more closely with British ideals than they would with Dutch. In an article describing a student's trip to Holland, he stated that the average South African,

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<sup>38</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 1(4), (1901), p. 76.

“be he of Dutch or of British descent, finds himself more at home in Great Britain amongst manners and customs to which he is used than in Holland, where he finds modes of life and thought to which he is not accustomed”.<sup>39</sup>

The position of Dutch speakers in the Cape had been somewhat marginal in terms of participation in active “public life” of the Colony. According to Giliomee, by 1870, many Dutch people were farming in the district, while “the largely urbanised English-speakers in the colony continued to dominate commerce, the small manufacturing sector, the civil service and Parliament”.<sup>40</sup> This assertion is reinforced by the work of van Heyningen who states that by the beginning of the twentieth century “[t]he Dutch were ousted from economic, political, and cultural control...”.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, the “openness” of the SAC was framed in terms of its establishment as a British public space. The fact that the College was English-medium and was positioning itself as part of a South African public life which the Dutch-speakers at the College were historically not dominant in is perhaps indicative of the kind of tolerance which the SAC was trying to provide: tolerance of difference within a British system. This reflected the sense of “colonial nationalism” which Dubow has discussed in the first decade of the twentieth century in South Africa, in which a “commitment to imperialism” was key to the idea of the new South African nation, particularly in the period after the South African War.<sup>42</sup>

Bickford-Smith argues that in the late nineteenth century in Cape Town, the ideas of Englishness and respectability were linked.<sup>43</sup> The idea of Englishness as the hallmark for civilisation would have been one which was naturally associated with a government-funded, English-speaking College like the SAC. Bickford-Smith argues that this respectability

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<sup>39</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4(3), (1904), p. 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Giliomee, H. “Western Cape farmers and the Beginnings of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1870-1915”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14(1), (1987), pp. 38-63, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> Van Heyningen, E. “Agents of Empire: The medical profession in the Cape Colony, 1880 -1910”, *Medical History*, 33, (1989), pp. 450-471, p. 451.

<sup>42</sup> Dubow, “Colonial Nationalism”, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p.39.

implied an acceptance “of the values of the English elite: thrift, the sanctity of property, deference to superiors, belief in the moralising efficacy of hard work and cleanliness.”<sup>44</sup>

These are values which were espoused by the SAC in the period under study. However, the SAC was also aware of the role that it could play in the construction of a space which was open to both English and Dutch South Africans.<sup>45</sup>

The idea of the SAC as a British institution was also reflected in sources beyond the SAC’s archive. *The State* magazine, which was published between 1909 and 1912, was, according to Merrington, “devoted to the overnight construction of a new ameliorative South African identity that would permit reconciliation between the English and Afrikaners”.<sup>46</sup> In an article printed in the magazine in 1910, an author called Edgar discussed the fact that the creation of a national teaching university was an essential way of promoting racial equality in South Africa.<sup>47</sup> Edgar wrote that “No better instrument could be devised for bringing all the different classes of people together and for developing a true South African spirit and a sense of common nationality”.<sup>48</sup> However, in this article Edgar made mention of the fact that the SAC had long been perceived as “trying to gain some advantage for itself at the expense of other colleges” and also that there was a great deal of animosity between the Colleges based on language and what is termed as “provincialism”.<sup>49</sup> While it is not my intention here to discuss in detail the perceptions of the SAC from the outside, what is important is that the SAC was not perceived from outside as a uniting force for all “new” South African citizens.

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<sup>44</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p.39

<sup>45</sup> In particular, the *SAC Magazines* commented on the ways in which the College was a space in which these racial divides were unimportant, and in fact, that they should be overcome. What is particularly important about the construction of the divide between Dutch and English in South Africa is that the differences between the groups are not referred to in derogatory terms. This is in contrast to the descriptions of women, whose access to the College spaces is often openly questioned in the Magazines. In this sense, the masculine environment of the SAC was able to deal with the admissions of Dutch and English in the College, but women were still constructed as “other”.

<sup>46</sup> Merrington, P. “Pageantry and Primitivism: Dorothea Fairbridge and the ‘Aesthetics of Union’”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(4), (1995), pp.643-656, p.654.

<sup>47</sup> Edgar had himself worked at the SAC in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and according to Nasson “was more inclined to reading sentences than writing them”, Nasson, “Cape or Cairo?”, p. 193.

<sup>48</sup> Edgar, “The Case for a National University”, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> Edgar, “The case for a National University”, p. 26.

Indeed, as the above discussion suggests, it was thought about as both English and elitist in some senses.

### *South African Students and a South African College*

On the College's Commemoration day in December 1902, months after the end of the South African War, the chairman addressed the Governor of the Cape and the student body who had assembled for the occasion, saying

In regard to the constitution of the College, they heard a good deal of the need of maintaining good feeling and friendliness between men of different races and nationalities in South Africa, especially between men of the two great European races. The Legislature had tried measures to that effect in the country as a College like that in which men of different nationalities met on a perfectly equal footing, and learnt how to respect each other.<sup>50</sup>

Once again, this extract shows the rhetoric of racial tolerance being mobilised at the SAC. Moreover, it constructs an ideal citizenship in which "men of different nationalities" could be treated as equals. Importantly, these speeches often referred to the "men" of different races, despite the presence of women at the SAC during this period. In this sense, the role of women in the "public" life of the College is marginalised. The citizens of the country, in this opinion, were men of the "two great European races" and the role of black South Africans and women in public life was marginalised. The South African citizen, who was visible to the public eye, was a white man of Dutch or British descent. In this sense, the marginalised groups who accessed the College were not constructed of an essential part of South Africa which was being discursively constructed at public occasions.

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<sup>50</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p.7, speech by Rev JM Russell. At this Commemoration Day celebration the Mayor of Cape Town spoke of the College, comparing its growth to that of a tree ("the seed sown that day [the day of the College's founding] had grown into a goodly tree"). The mayor then referenced the political problems which had faced the College, saying "They had not attained this growth rapidly or under any forced system, but gradually and surely through storm and sunshine they had grown up until they had achieved the proud position they at present occupied." (p.3)

The South African War required a rethinking of the SAC's status within South Africa. Apart from the logistical problems which the South African War brought to the SAC, with students being unable to return to the College on time and some being unable to pay fees, the war also necessitated that the SAC as a public institution actively positioned itself both in terms of Dutch and English relations, as well as its relationship to Empire.<sup>51</sup> In fact, the College song, which was composed in 1887, was modified to include the following verses in 1902:

Our blood varies much,  
We are English, French, Dutch  
And German in pedigree,  
But, whatever our race,  
Racial feuds we efface  
In love for the old S.A.C.

For English and Dutch it's all the same,  
In this we agree,  
To spread the name and swell the fame  
Of the S.A.C.<sup>52</sup>

What the SAC was ostensibly providing within the boundaries of the College was an education which would erase ethnic intolerance and would lead to the creation of a cohort of men who had been trained together at the SAC seeing past the divides of "racial" intolerance. As the formation of Union approached, however, it becomes increasingly clear that the College was attempting to construct a specifically "South African" ideal of what their students should be. In this sense, the idea of the "British" institution which admitted Dutch students was marginalised in favour of an institutional understanding of the space which was essentially South African. For example, the first time that Dutch articles were printed consistently in the *Magazine* was in 1910. This indicates some of the ways in which the SAC

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<sup>51</sup> See CM, 23 Dec 1899. This meeting recorded that many students, who came from as far as the Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Ladysmith, were unable to make contact with their parents and were thus unable to pay their fees. The Secretary of Council also left the SAC during this period to work for the Prisoner-of-War department at St Helena. See CM, 4 April 1902. This certainly should cast some doubt about the political allegiance of the SAC in this period.

<sup>52</sup> College song, the verses quoted above which were added to the original version by Prof Ritchie at a Commemoration celebration. Ritchie, *The History of the SAC*, p. 303-4. It is not clear from Ritchie whether these verses were written in 1902, however, they were printed in the *SAC Magazine* which was referring to the Commemoration Day celebrations in 1902, so one can assume that they were added in this year.

was not acting as a bounded entity, but was open to its socio-political context. By including articles written in Dutch, the SAC was attempting to show the ways in which the discourse of “racial tolerance” at the College could have very real implications, instead of being used merely as a way of the SAC protecting its own status in South Africa. Indeed, printing articles in Dutch would have shown an awareness of the need to adapt some of what the SAC stood for in response to the formation of Union in South Africa. Essentially, this meant a rethinking of what it meant to be “South African”.

A letter from an Old Boy which discussed the recently formed Union of South Africa stated that it was the role of the College to promote Union. “The true Union of the races”, he stated, “can be most efficient viz. in the class-room and in the sporting field”.<sup>53</sup> Of course, this idea of the Union of races is gendered, as the sporting field was, in this period of the SAC’s history, seen as an essentially masculine space. The male SAC student, the author continued, “never asks himself whether he is Dutch or English but remembers that he was educated where such distinctions were never fostered. He was only asked to become a good a[nd] true South African.”<sup>54</sup>

In the period following the formation of Union in 1910, there was an increasing drive within the College to respond to the challenges of the South African context, particularly in terms of syllabus. For example, in 1913, the Council was presented with a letter from Reyburn and Walker, who taught Philosophy and History respectively, which discussed the necessity of creating a professorship of economics at the SAC, stating that “At present the special economic conditions of South Africa have not been fully investigated, the information is still to [be] collect[ed] from Blue Books and other sources, the work can be done adequately only

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<sup>53</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 12(2), (1911), p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 12(2), (1911), p. 18.

by men who are not amateurs but have been trained in the rudiments of their business.”<sup>55</sup> The Professors proposed the appointment of a Professor who could train people within South Africa to understand the local conditions. This example shows the way in which this period saw increasing colonial nationalism, which meant that the country’s own value within the Empire needed to be recognised within an institution like the SAC. While for many years it had been possible to study economics further at an overseas institution, what was important for these two professors was that the work could be done in, and about South Africa. They also stated that having a professor of economics would serve to enhance the reputation of the College within South Africa.<sup>56</sup> The first formal South African historical society was also formed directly after the formation of Union, in 1913.<sup>57</sup> Eric Walker, who worked at the SAC, was on the initial organising committee and later wrote a history of South Africa, which, according to Nasson, was the “go-to” text for historians of South Africa for the following forty years.<sup>58</sup>

The idea of colonial nationalism adequately describes the way in which the SAC was constructing their ideal of what the College should stand for in the first decade of the twentieth century. By insisting that the College saw no difference between Dutch and English South Africans, and saying that these differences were erased in the classrooms, the College was constructing a picture of how the ideal South Africa could and should have looked. Indeed, the absence of discussion about the “other” races in South Africa being part of this ideal College space is indicative of the “exclusionist” aspect of colonial nationalism. Bickford-Smith argues that “white ethnicity was part of the consciousness of belonging to the

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<sup>55</sup> Letter from Reyburn and Walker to Council, in CM, 25 March 1913.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Reyburn and Walker to Council, in CM, 25 March 1913.

<sup>57</sup> See Saunders, C and Le Courdeur, B, “The South African Historical Society and its Antecedents”, *South African Historical Journal*, 18(1), (1986), pp. 1-23.

<sup>58</sup> Nasson, “Cape or Cairo?”, p. 193.

city's dominant class in Cape Town.”<sup>59</sup> In this sense, the rhetoric of racial tolerance at the SAC was also about conforming to some sort of conception of what a government institution *should* be.

The nationalist sentiment which the SAC was trying to promote during the period after the South African War was one which positioned the College at the centre of the future of South Africa. With the increasing segregation in educational facilities, the SAC proposed a “public” College, drawing on international trends for “public” education. While the idea of the “public” university was one which seemed modern and forward-looking, the discussion above has shown some of the ways in which the public to be provided for was one which showed a love for the South Africa which was experienced by the dominant classes, and one which was strongly linked to the British Empire. In reality, the nationalism which the SAC was promoting was intricately tied to the institutional context of the SAC, and a belief that the College was providing a space which could serve as a model for the functioning of the country. Thus, this chapter has shown the ways in which the conception of the “public” which the SAC was providing for changed over time. While the admission of women, and the overt discussions over race and admissions did change the idea of the “public” at the SAC somewhat, the most challenging thing for the College was making the distinction between different kinds of white men. In the period before Union, the idea of British-ness was emphasised as a dominant ideology within the College space, while in the years directly leading up to and after the formation of Union, the idea of racial tolerance and South Africanism were emphasised. This chapter has placed the SAC in the context of a changing South Africa, showing the ways in which the institution was affected by changes in the country. In this sense, the idea of the College as a static entity, and one which was governed completely by internal traditions, like the ones of “racial tolerance” which were mobilised at

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<sup>59</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 24

various points in the SAC's history, is challenged. The following chapter will comment further on the SAC's location within the discursive space of the British Empire, showing the ways in which the College was seen by those working outside it.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Great cities of the Empire: A Cape Town College*

The SAC attained full university status as core of what became the University of Cape Town following the passing of Act 14 of 1916, which transformed the College into a fully-fledged University, to be situated at the Groote Schuur campus. This change in status was achieved after multiple enquiries into the state of higher education in South Africa, conducted both internally at the College and by the local government. The question of the state of higher education in South Africa was a matter of interest and concern both within South Africa and within the British Empire more widely. The focus of this chapter is on the Loveday Commission of Enquiry into the state of higher education in South Africa and the future of the SAC, which was conducted by the College in 1904 and 1905.

This commission of enquiry provides a useful lens into perceptions of the SAC's role within South Africa from other higher education institutions in the British Empire. The Commission focused on gaining information on the state of higher education in other British colonial territories and in Britain itself, in order to indicate ways in which the College could progress in its goal of achieving university status. Thus, the ways in which the College portrayed itself to these other institutions are described. Once again, the importance of the concept of "reputation" for the institution is indicated. Two main things stand out in this discussion. The first is the way that the College's position in Cape Town is drawn on as a legitimisation of its role in South African higher education. The second is the importance of tradition, both of the College's age, and of its ideologies, in showing what made the College particularly central as a public institution in South Africa. This discussion also positions the College at the

intersection of many different physical and intellectual spaces: within the Cape, South Africa, and the British Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The previous chapter has shown the way in which the idea of the “public” which the SAC was providing for changed over time. In particular, this involved a discussion of the transformation of the SAC’s relationship to the idea of “British-ness” and its self-promotion as an open South African institution. Chronologically, this chapter goes back in time in order to develop the discussion about the SAC’s relationship to the British Empire. Once again, this chapter points to the centrality of “place” in understanding the meaning of an institution.

### *A Cape Colonial University*

As a starting point for this chapter, it is important to contextualise the debates about the creation of a national teaching university in South Africa. From the first decade of the twentieth century, the SAC sought to create a national teaching university. In 1873, the University Incorporation Act was passed “for the better advancement of sound learning amongst all classes of Her Majesty’s subjects in this Colony”.<sup>2</sup> This act created the University of the Cape of Good Hope (UCGH), which was an examining body. The model for this system was the University of London, and the role of the UCGH was to “set the standard for higher education in its various branches in South Africa”.<sup>3</sup> In the Cape Colony, the colleges that wrote the examinations from the UCGH were the South African College, Diocesan College (which later became Bishops School and its College functions merged with the SAC), and Victoria College in Stellenbosch, the Grey Institute, Gill College and St Andrews College. For a number of reasons, from the late nineteenth century, the SAC found

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<sup>1</sup> Importantly, the College’s relationship to its location within the continent of Africa is absent from its own descriptions of itself. In this sense, its geographical proximity to African countries, and British African countries in particular, was less “intellectually” important than its imagined closeness to the traditions of other colonies within the British Empire.

<sup>2</sup> Metrowich, FC. *The Development of Higher Education in South Africa, 1873-1927*, (Maskew Miller Ltd, Cape Town, 1929), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Metrowich, *The Development of Higher Education*, p. 3.

this situation unsatisfactory. The desire to establish a national *teaching* university was mainly about the need for teaching and examination bodies to be controlled by one unit, instead of the UCGH compiling the syllabus and exams, and individual Colleges seeing to the teaching provisions.

The SAC held a private commission of enquiry into the matter of the establishment of a national teaching university in 1904. The advice sought about the formation of the university indicates some of the ways in which the SAC was positioning itself in terms of its national and international reputation. What becomes clear is that the formation of a national teaching university was about more than the simple conversion of the College into a university, and called for the self-promotion of the SAC. Apart from the fact that the creation of a University would be costly, it also required some agreement between various South African colleges and university colleges about the status and future of higher education in the country. This discussion points to the importance of the SAC's "public" image.

In 1904, the UCGH sent the SAC a circular, asking whether the education system in South Africa required reform. The response from the SAC was the creation of an internal committee of enquiry into the matter, who, according to Walker, consisted of the "Scotsmen" at the College.<sup>4</sup> Professor Beattie, Crawford, Dendy, Hahn, Lewis, Loveday, and Ritchie were involved in the committee, known as the Loveday Committee, which sought to explore the history of higher education in South Africa, and then to seek advice about the future of the College from various overseas educational institutions. According to the report of the commission of enquiry, the committee felt "the information required would be best obtained if individual members were to communicate with the members of the staffs of other

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<sup>4</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 67.

institutions with whom they were acquainted”.<sup>5</sup> Thus began a commission of enquiry in which the SAC positioned itself as part of a transnational web of ties which linked together educational institutions throughout the British Empire. The fact that members of the SAC staff were personally acquainted with other higher education role players across the world facilitated the enquiry into the status of the College, South African higher education and illuminated imperial networks of higher education.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note the ways in which the “official” sources of the College do not make the link with the British Empire as clear as the records of this commission of enquiry. The Council and Senate minutes rarely situated the College in the British Empire, as doing so was not always beneficial or necessary to the functioning of the College on a day-to-day basis. The majority of times in which England is mentioned are in connection with the appointment of staff from England to teach at the College.<sup>7</sup> These cases indicate that it was seen as preferable by the College to appoint teachers or professors who had been trained in England or Scotland, rather than to appoint people who had been trained locally. The “space” of the British Empire was often constructed as an imagined location in which there was “good work” in the service of higher education occurring. However, the relationship between the SAC and the other educational institutions within the Empire was more complicated than a simple emulation of their functions, as the SAC was aware that in order for the College to function to its maximum capacity, students needed to stay in South Africa for their higher education qualifications. For example, the Council minutes expressed some concern in 1892, when the SAC had delayed in the process of opening a Government School of Mines in South

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<sup>5</sup> “Report of the Committee of Senate on University Education”. BC215 – C 9. The records of this Commission are housed in the Beattie Collection at the Manuscripts and Archives section of the University of Cape Town library.

<sup>6</sup> One of the reasons for this would have been that many of these Scotsmen had been trained overseas, and one can assume that colleagues in other colonies had also studied in Britain.

<sup>7</sup> See for eg, CM, 26 May 1893; 20 Dec 1895; 3 Dec 1898; 19 June 1899; 28 June 1901; 20 May 1905.

Africa, and the Council stated that many students had already left the country because of the delay and were now studying in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

In opposition to the usually peripheral mentions of the British Empire in Council and Senate minutes of the College, the Loveday Commission firmly located the SAC within the British Empire. The British Empire's educational facilities suddenly appear in the records of the SAC, as they were answering the questionnaires which the SAC had sent out. In a discussion of imperial education and the state in Australia and New Zealand, Sherington and Horne have argued that "it is not sufficient to stress just the periphery or just the centre in understanding the founding and early histories of universities and colleges in the Antipodes."<sup>9</sup> They go on to argue that while in the Antipodes imperial connections were important to the founding and ideas surrounding higher education, there was "continuous engagement" with "many different localities" as well.<sup>10</sup> This aptly describes the situation at the SAC. While its situation in an imperial and global educational context would have held some currency in the ways in which its idea of education and teaching emerged, it was also responding to role-players, identities, and very specific Cape, and South African, contexts. For example, the role of Scottish-born and educated professors at the College was at some times in the College's history, highly influential, and indeed impacted on the kind of education which the SAC was offering.<sup>11</sup> However, the local context of South Africa, with its unique racial and political makeup in this period also influenced the way in which the College operated.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> CM; 27 Feb 1892. The School of Mines provides a good example of the SAC needing to respond to its immediate location in South Africa. The course consisted of a theoretical component which students completed at the SAC, followed by a practical component on the mines.

<sup>9</sup> Sherington, G. and Horne, J., "Empire, State and Public Purpose in the founding of universities and colleges in the Antipodes", *History of Education Review*, 39 (2), 2010, pp. 36-51, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Sherington and Horne, "Empire, State and Public Purpose", p. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Ludlow's discussion of Scottish teachers at the Cape is indicative of the ways in which imperial concerns played out in local contexts. See Ludlow, "State Schooling".

<sup>12</sup> For example, the implications of "racial" discourses with regards to education impacted on the SAC's governing ideologies.

The Loveday Committee drew up a questionnaire which was sent out to various British and colonial universities asking about the formation of the universities in these countries (“under what circumstances was the charter for the university obtained”), the population statistics for the districts in which the universities were situated, the functions of the universities’ Councils and Senates, and most importantly, whether there should be formed a federal college which would be made up of the SAC and other colleges in the area, or whether the SAC should form a university independently. The questionnaire was thus asking the men who responded to comment on both the suitability of the SAC to form a new university, and was also seeking the experiential knowledge of men throughout the Empire. The following Colleges were asked for advice: Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Sheffield, Wales (Bangor and Cardiff), Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, New Zealand, Dalhousie, McGill (Montreal), and the Queen's College, Galway. The extent of this survey was therefore far reaching, being sent to both colonial and British universities. The responses from the various universities and colleges are labelled in the Beattie Collection, assumedly by Beattie himself, as “letters from eminent University men in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada”.<sup>13</sup> This labelling provides some insight into the way in which the committee at the SAC was conceptualising the task they were undertaking, and also shows the ways in which this would have impacted on their own conceptions of their role in colonial education.

The responses from the various universities and colleges indicated that most did not favour the idea of federation with other colleges (nine out of fifteen), as indicated in the response from the University College of North Wales, that “altogether apart from the possibility of depressing influence of weaker Colleges such as you hint at, [federation] necessitates a cumbrous administrative machinery which diverts the energies of teaching staff from their

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<sup>13</sup> BC 215 - C8.

proper function.”<sup>14</sup> The weaker College which the SAC hinted at was most likely the Victoria College, as there had been rivalry between the two, especially in terms of “poaching” each other’s students in the period directly proceeding this. Other advice included “try and keep University work clear of religion and politics as far as possible”, which, significantly, came from Galway.<sup>15</sup>

The responses from the universities ranged from simple letters back, in which *College Calendars* were sent which answered most of the questions which were being posed by the SAC, to long letters which discussed in detail why Cape Town should have a university. For example, a letter from J Arthur Thomson, Regis Professor of Natural History at Aberdeen University, addressed to “my dear Beattie”, stated the following:

I am strongly of opinion that the City of Cape Town deserves and needs a Teaching University, that a College staffed on a level with Universities and teaching at the same level should be *ipso facto* a University, that it is prejudicial when those who teach do not also examine for degrees, that the more educational autonomy a University has the better its work will be, and that it should be the aim of every such institution to develop not in mimicry of any other but on independent lines of its own, adaptive to the particular needs of the area of its staff and of the area of which it is the centre.<sup>16</sup>

The way in which this letter addressed the recipient is indicative of a personal relationship between Beattie and Thomson. This response positions Cape Town as “the centre” of its area, and “[deserving]” of a university. What is particularly interesting is that at this point in South Africa’s history, there was a growing sense of the importance of South Africa’s own identity as separate from other colonies within the British Empire. The sense of South African individuality, which is expressed in terms of a relationship to the British Empire, is what

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from Letter from HR Reichel to Prof Loveday, 26 Jan 1905, from Univ College of North Wales. BC 215 – C8.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Prof Bromwich to Crawford, Queen’s College, Galway, 6 May 1905. BC 215 - C8.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Thomson to Beattie. BC 215 - C8.

Eddy and Schreuder have termed “colonial nationalism”.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the role of the university in promoting nationalism was emphasised in the report of the committee which stated that “Cape Town needs and deserves a University no less than Sheffield, Montreal, or the Australian cities; and all experience goes to show that the idea of a University would appeal to civic pride and would fire local enthusiasm.”<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the importance of the Cape’s status within the Empire is emphasised, as it is compared to the other colonial cities which had universities. In particular, the idea of “fir[ing] local enthusiasm” would have been particularly important in the period after the South African War, which had ended two years prior to the start of the SAC’s investigation into higher education. Further, the idea that the university should “develop not in mimicry of any other [university]” reinforces the idea that there should be something unique about the provision of higher education in South Africa, and Cape Town in particular.

The “university question” was addressed by the report, compiled after the survey by the members of the SAC committee. It stated that

Not only does the College deserve University powers, but the City of Cape Town deserves a Teaching University. As at once the capital and the great town of the Colony it is the natural place for the prosecution of the higher technical and professional studies. Other centres may aspire to offer instruction in Arts and Pure Science, but only in Cape Town can this instruction be supplemented by Faculties of Medicine, Engineering and the like. Further, Cape Town is one of the great cities of the Empire. Its importance must not be measured merely by its population; its age, its history, the fame of its situation, conspire to give it dignity.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, the social space of Cape Town was used as a legitimating factor for the SAC in its quest to establish a teaching university. Cape Town’s status as a “great city of the Empire”

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<sup>17</sup> See Eddy and Schreuder on *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism*.

<sup>18</sup> “Report of the Committee of Senate on University Education”. Sheffield had been established as a University College in 1897, and became a university in 1905 making this a particularly pertinent comparison for the SAC.

<sup>19</sup> “Report of the Committee of Senate on University Education”.

meant that it was in a position to have a teaching university, which would further legitimate its uniqueness within South Africa, and its colonial connections. In this sense, the conception of Cape Town, and the College, as both the centre of the Cape, and the centre of higher education in the colony, was a discourse which was shared both by those who answered the survey and those who were working at the College. Further, the College's situation in Cape Town was reinforced by the city's age and history, which, in the eyes of the College, made Cape Town the correct historical place for the start of a teaching university in South Africa.

The importance of Cape Town as an imperial city is particularly interesting in light of the fact that in the lead up to the formation of Union in 1910, there was debate about where the capital city of the unified South Africa should be. Cape Town was the capital of the British Cape colony, and in the climate of increasing "South Africanism", or colonial nationalism, the movement of the capital away from Cape Town was a matter of debate for white South Africans. Ross argues that the "clumsy solution" of having three capitals, Pretoria, Cape Town and Bloemfontein, each with an individual function, was the only way for the "competing claims of the two major colonies [to] be reconciled".<sup>20</sup> The movement of the administrative capital to Pretoria meant a symbolic break with the colonial centre of Cape Town. After the South African War, there was an increasing need to redefine the relationship between South Africa and Britain, and one of the ways of doing this was through emphasising the colonial connections which the Cape, in particular, had with other parts of the British Empire. The impact of the South African War for those outside of South Africa should not be overlooked, as it called into question assumptions about Britain's colonial supremacy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ross, R. *A Concise History of South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, (7<sup>th</sup> ed., 2007), p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> For example, a cursory reading of the student magazines of Sydney University, called *Hermes*, indicates that on the University of Sydney campus, the South African War was a matter of debate for students and staff. See for example, 5(4), (1900), and 8(2), (1902).

In light of the argument put forward in the previous chapter, about the changing identification of the College from an essentially “English” space to one which was more “South African”, the way in which the College was viewed from beyond its walls in this period is particularly interesting. The emphasis of the College’s responses on the importance of the Cape’s colonial identity shows the way in which the College space was interpreted differently by those who were working within it, and those who were evaluating its role from outside South Africa. While it would be misleading to argue that the College staff unanimously saw the first decade of the twentieth century as a time to redefine the status of the College within South Africa, the previous chapter has shown that the idea of the College as a British institution was being destabilised in this period. In this sense, the survey holds even more significance in light of the way in which institutional histories are written, as it denies the chronological movement of the College from a space which was British to one which was South African as being a simple linear trajectory. Indeed, looking beyond South Africa, to the British Empire, for advice about the College’s future, seems to contradict the discourse of racial tolerance and space for a new South African citizen which the SAC was attempting to foster in this period.

The survey indicates the connectedness of the SAC with other colonial education institutions. While many of the responses which the SAC received did state that the respondents did not know the context of the South African education system, many also indicated their interest in the matter of the establishment of a university in South Africa. For example, in a letter to Professor Dendy from Sydney MacKrone, in Withington, Manchester, he wrote “of course in writing down my opinion on this difficult subject I feel I am labouring under the disadvantage of not knowing enough about S. African affairs but the matter of colonial universities is [no] longer a matter of indifference to us.” MacKrone went on to explain that various colonial universities were approved for admission of their students into some postgraduate courses and that it was “of importance to you that the standard of your

University teaching should be sufficiently high to enable us to “approve” your Universities...”<sup>22</sup> In this sense, the SAC’s calling for the founding of a national university in South Africa was about more than simply its own reputation within South Africa, and its importance in Cape Town. It was also a way of instilling in other colonial universities the importance of the work which was being done, for example, by “a Cambridge man holding the fort in S[outh] Africa”.<sup>23</sup>

Nothing came of this commission of enquiry, in spite of its wide-scale implementation and research. The recommendation proposed by the College committee was that the College should, at an appropriate time, “with least possible delay”, file a request to the government to form the University of Cape Town, within which the SAC would be incorporated. The recommendation to the government seems not to have produced any real results, and the next few years saw another series of failed attempts at the creation of a national teaching university. Rivalry between the different Cape Colleges seems to have hindered any real progress in this period, particularly in light of the changing political landscape in this period. In particular, the relationship of the different Colleges to English and Dutch language teaching was a matter of public debate.<sup>24</sup>

### *The College and Cape Town*

The role of the SAC in the development of higher education in the Cape and in South Africa more generally had been a matter of concern for the College Council before this organised survey. In a special meeting of Council in 1902, on the topic of the development of the college, which was to be presented to parliament, the Council reported that the SAC was the

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from Sydney MacKrone to Dendy, 12 March 1905, Ellesmere House, Withington. BC 215-C8.

<sup>23</sup> Letter in which MacBude described Crawford as such. Letter from MacBude, McGill University (Montreal) to Crawford, 5 April 1905, BC 215-C8.

<sup>24</sup> See News clippings in the Beattie Collection BC 215 – C7 and J. Edgar, “The Case for a National University”, pp. 19 – 30.

oldest institution of its kind in South Africa, and that it had for a long period been undervalued financially by the government. The Council report went on to say that

Regarding the S.A College as a national Institution it seems reasonable to contend that it should not be dependent on private benefaction or charity. Institutions like the S.A Museum and the S.A Public Library, received Government Grants suited to their metropolitan national character, while provincial Museums and Libraries receive relatively small grants.<sup>25</sup>

It was exactly this “metropolitan national character”, in the eyes of the Council members, which made the formation of a university college in Cape Town so important. The reference to the College as a “national Institution” once again points to a growing sense of colonial nationalism which indicates the importance of the Institution as a legitimating factor in the status of South Africa as a nation within the British Empire.

The role of Cape Town as a great colonial city was often emphasized in the *SAC Magazine*. This points to the permeability of the institutional space at the SAC: part of the reason that the SAC was to become a university, in the eyes of its staff (and students), and those in the British Empire more broadly, was that it was situated in a city which *deserved* a university. In this sense, the College itself was aware of the meaning of its location for its development. For example, the role of the SAC in South Africa was already being emphasised by the Rev JM Russell, who served on the SAC Senate between 1874 and 1916, having only a four-year break, between 1881 and 1885. On the Annual Commemoration Day celebration day, Russell gave a speech, at which the Governor was present. He

observed that there were several colleges doing admirable service in regard to University Education, but that the College had a special place in the life of South Africa. It was a Cape Town College. They wanted to keep the prestige of Cape Town as the old capital of South Africa, and the one thing that

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<sup>25</sup> CM, 22 July 1902.

would help to keep up that prestige, in view of the development of the North, was that Cape Town should have a College that would be a credit to it, and which would draw students from all parts.<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, although this example is not directly about the transformation of the College into a university, the College was using its place as a way of legitimating its South African presence. Drawing on the significance of Cape Town's history, Russell sought to legitimate the role of the SAC as a College in the most important city in South Africa at a time of great change for the country. In this example, Cape Town provides legitimacy to the College's status, and the College reinforces Cape Town's status as an important city in South Africa, keeping up the "prestige" of the city.

In 1903, in a discussion of the University Development scheme which the College was undertaking in order to establish whether it was feasible for a national teaching university to be founded, a meeting of the Old Boys' Union considered the question. In this meeting, the current mayor of Cape Town, a Mr Thorne, once again pointed to the physical space of Cape Town as a legitimating factor in the formation of a university. He argued that

the city men of Cape Town are more and more recognising what a great College, efficient in all branches of education, must mean to the city in which it is established, and that it is in the best interests of Cape Town that our College, which is the oldest and premier South African College, should spread its sphere of usefulness still further, and should grow more replete in all varieties of educational advantages.<sup>27</sup>

### *A traditional university*

Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh were left out of the survey conducted by the Loveday Committee. While this is not surprising in terms of the way in which the UCGH was set up as

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<sup>26</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 7. It is interesting that this extract refers to Cape Town as the "old" capital, given that the final movement of the administrative and legislative capitals only occurred in 1910. The end of the South African War would already have made the relationship between Cape Town and its imperial context a subject of interest and debate.

<sup>27</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 3(1), (1903), p. 2.

an examining university, as opposed to the Collegiate model of Oxford and Cambridge, these two universities were symbolically important for the SAC, and in particular, for its student body. The *SAC Magazine* often included stories about SAC students who had left for Oxford and Cambridge, and printed their letters to the College magazine. For example, in 1902, we learn that Frank Lucas had moved to Worcester College at Oxford as he had received a Colonial Scholarship.<sup>28</sup> Another letter home from an Old Boy at Oxford detailed the differences between Cambridge and Oxford, and the author's hope that more SAC old boys would choose to go to Oxford rather than Cambridge.<sup>29</sup> The departure of a large number of SAC students to further their studies at Oxford or Cambridge was a source of pride for the writers of the *SAC Magazine*, who on one student's departure, commented that he was to be added to "the long and distinguished list of SAC students who are or have been prosecuting their studies at the University of Oxford and Cambridge".<sup>30</sup>

The South African students who had excelled at Oxford and Cambridge were used as a way of the SAC legitimating its own status within South Africa. A letter to the *Magazine* regarding the formation of a teaching university in South Africa pointed to the fact that

some will compare us to the average student at an English university, and will say that we are inferior in intellectual ability to our cousins across the sea. But to crush such an argument, one has merely to point to the many South African students who, in spite of keen competition, have distinguished themselves at Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and the Continental universities.<sup>31</sup>

In fact, Edinburgh, being a place where many of the SAC professors had been educated occupied more of an important symbolic space than some of the younger universities in

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<sup>28</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 3(1), (1903), p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 4(2), (1904), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 9(3), (1908), p. 7.

Europe and the colonies upon which the SAC was modelling itself.<sup>32</sup> The fact that the students who had been educated at the SAC could hold their own at these “traditional” Universities legitimated the role of the SAC in providing higher education in South Africa. The educational model of the South African College, as with other South African universities, was built on the Scottish degree model.

The age of the College was often used as a way of legitimating its status in the public sphere in South Africa. Once again, the Commemoration Day speeches which were made about the importance of the SAC to South Africa indicate the way in which they were constructing themselves as “old” and therefore, the natural choice for holding public attention in South Africa. The mayor of Cape Town, also at this time a Council member, FW Smith stated that

...we can say with truth that it [the SAC] is one of the oldest Colonial institutions of its kind within the present limits of the British Empire. The circumstances under which it was founded 73 years ago, by the practically united efforts of the people of this city and neighbourhood, were an almost prophetic indication of the broad lines of racial amity and religious tolerance along which its development has ever since proceeded.<sup>33</sup>

The tradition of racial and religious tolerance which was promoted at the College was rhetorically important at this point, just after the end of the South African war. It was also the tradition of the College as “one of the oldest” in the British Empire which made it a suitable public institution. At a time of great change for Cape Town, and for South Africa, drawing on the age of the College and commenting on its stability would have been a way of asserting its longevity for the future of South Africa. Bickford-Smith’s work on Cape Town at the turn of the twentieth century points to the fact that the period under study was one of rapid change for Cape Town. The rapid urbanisation and consequent strain on limited resources within

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<sup>32</sup> In particular, the results of the survey discussed above found that the situation in South Africa most closely resembled the situation in New Zealand.

<sup>33</sup> *SAC Magazine*, 2(4), (1902), p. 5.

Cape Town had become a matter of concern for Cape Town's bourgeoisie from the 1870s.<sup>34</sup>

To show the way in which the SAC was both traditional and timeless, as it could adapt to changing circumstances, was to promote its visibility for the Cape Town dominant classes.

After the formation of Union in 1910, the importance of the College's location in Cape Town was emphasised even further, as the status of Cape Town in the new Union had changed. In a letter to the Cape Town Council, in which the SAC was requesting increased grants for its teaching and facilities, the College wrote with the aim of "showing the important asset the College is to the Peninsula", and arguing that "if the status and prestige of the institution are to be maintained further financial support must be forthcoming".<sup>35</sup> At this point the SAC needed to illustrate the importance of its institutional status and location and wrote that other university colleges in Britain, referred to as "the older centres of civilisation", were receiving more annual funding. The letter was closed with the important statement that if the Unified Town Council could provide the SAC with more funding, "the Peninsula will be materially benefited, and at the same time Greater Cape Town will be making a fitting and a wise contribution to the higher life of South Africa."<sup>36</sup> This example is illuminating as it shows the multiple ways in which the SAC was positioning itself. First and foremost, it was situated in the Cape Peninsula, and the importance of it as a public *Cape Town* institution was emphasised. However, it was also asserting its importance for South Africa in general, and its place within the British Empire. In this sense, the SAC was positioning itself as part of multiple, converging public spaces.

#### *The future of the SAC: The SAC and South Africa*

As the above discussion has shown, in spite of the College's historic location and traditional character, its location in South Africa became the most important factor in deciding its future

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<sup>34</sup> Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice*, p. 39.

<sup>35</sup> CM, 18 Sept 1913.

<sup>36</sup> Letter to the Unified Town Council, found in the SAC CM, dated 28 Aug 1913.

role for higher education in the country. At an inter-colonial conference in 1908, at which all of the South African colonies met to discuss the matter of higher education in South Africa, it was found that that “it is not expedient at present to establish single college universities in South Africa” and that there should be formed one university, forming out of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, which would be called the University of South Africa.<sup>37</sup> This conference once again saw little change taking place.

According to Phillips, the formation of Union “transformed the question of the SAC’s future status from a purely Cape matter to a national one, to be tackled with an eye to wider issues.”<sup>38</sup> The Thomson Commission into higher education was requested by the government a year after the formation of Union in 1911. William Thomson, Registrar of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, was to be the chairman of the commission. The commission was to report on “the position at the different University Colleges in the Union” with regards to their staffing, salaries, buildings, apparatus, income from state and other sources, fees charged and so on.<sup>39</sup> Importantly, one of the other functions of the commission was to enquire as to whether there was an “ultimate uniformity of administration and equality of treatment” at all of the “University Colleges” in South Africa. This is particularly significant in light of the political context of South Africa at this time. The formation of Union in 1910 meant a rethinking of power structures in the country, with the position of Cape Town as the capital being a matter of debate and the relationship between South Africa and its colonial administration being refashioned. The importance which was being placed on uniformity in the Colleges was as much about the equality of the colleges as it was about the formation of new national identities through the institutions which were situated in South Africa.

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<sup>37</sup> Berry, WB. *Report of the Inter-colonial Conference on University Education in South Africa*, (Cape Times, Cape Town, 1908), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Phillips, *The University of Cape Town*, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Report of a Commission appointed to Inquire into and Report upon Matters Concerning Higher Education in the Union*, (UG No 48 - 1911).

The Commission found that only Natal University College and Grey University were state institutions in the strict sense of the words; the other Colleges were state-aided, as they received private grants as well. The Thomson Commission also reported that the SAC was in need of more staff. The Thomson commission reported that there should be a regulation of government aid to the various institutions, but nothing came of this, as the bill which was drafted to ensure the equality of the colleges was never passed.<sup>40</sup>

The Laurence Commission of 1914 did the major work of establishing a national teaching university. In a voluminous report of the Commission, which discusses professional training, salaries for teachers and professors, curriculum, facilities, finances and so on, the Commission found that there should be two teaching universities formed, one in Cape Town, and another in Pretoria.<sup>41</sup> This report, which referred to the finances which had been granted by Beit and Werhner, saw to the establishment of what became the University of Cape Town. The report also shows a marked difference between the conception of the Colleges as somewhere between modern understandings of schools and universities. For example, in the subsection of the report about sports and recreation, the report argues that

There is indeed a danger, in the English-speaking world of the present day, of attaching exaggerated importance to such matters. The University should be a place for both study and recreation, but the latter word should be used in its exact sense. The rising generation will leave their College adorned with caps and hoods, but ill-equipped for holding their own amid the strenuous conditions of modern life, if their thoughts and interests, during the critical period of adolescence, have been concentrated on the jargon of “finals” and the obsession of “records” on the study, not of Herodotus and Pindar, but of latter day “Marathons” and contemporary “Olympiads”; if, in a word, the campus and the stadium have

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<sup>40</sup> Walker, *The SAC and the University of Cape Town*, p. 87.

<sup>41</sup> Laurence, P, *Report of the University Commission/Union of South Africa*, (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1914).

been put in the foreground and not relegated to their proper sphere as ancillary to the serious work of the classes and the schools.<sup>42</sup>

In this sense, the conception of the role of a higher education space in the life of the students was seemingly beginning to change.

The distinctiveness of the SAC as an imperial institution, situated in Cape Town, was one which began to change with the growth of colonial nationalism in the period following the South African War, and throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. This chapter has shown the ways in which the SAC was defined as an imperial institution from outside, and how this added to its own sense of “Englishness” in Cape Town. However, the delay in the formation of a national teaching university until some years after the formation of Union shows the way in which the College’s imperial identity was becoming secondary to demands on it from within South Africa. The SAC’s status as the only South African university was never achieved, as Victoria College in Stellenbosch was given university status as the University of Stellenbosch, and the UCGH was incorporated to form the federal University of South Africa in February 1916.<sup>43</sup>

The implications of the above discussion for the idea of the “public” and “private” within the SAC are that the College was seeking to portray multiple “public” images at any given time. While it was seeking to show the ways in which it was worthy of status within the British Empire, the SAC was also attempting to show the ways in which it was an important part of South African national life. The implementation of a commission of enquiry which was given to other institutions within the British Empire positioned the College as the most important educational facility within the Cape Colony. This chapter has shown the ways that the SAC was trying to define its own reputation in relation to a changing socio-political landscape in

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<sup>42</sup> Laurence, *Report of the University Commission/Union of South Africa*, p.48.

<sup>43</sup> Phillips, *The University of Cape Town*, p. 4.

South Africa. In doing so, the importance of spatial understandings of identity for the institution are raised once again. The SAC's location in different discursive spaces constructed the institution as at the intersection of the meanings of what it meant to be South African, British, Dutch, and Capetonian in this period.

## CONCLUSION

Institutions like the SAC draw on their history in order to maintain their relevance in a constantly changing social world. In a meeting of the Council in 1902, in which the development of the College was discussed, it was decided that a notice should be presented to Parliament, in which

Attention should also be called to the unsectarian, undenominational national character of the College.

It may fairly be urged that the College has priority of claim upon the State for support. Numbers of our most distinguished public men and prominent citizens acknowledge their indebtedness to it.<sup>1</sup>

The SAC sought to position itself as critical to South African public life, almost from the time of its inception. This thesis has placed the SAC, between 1880 and 1918, within a set of increasingly wide lenses of analysis. By moving from the micro-level of the individual students at the College, to the role of the Council members, and finally to the College's location within Cape Town, South Africa, and the British Empire, I have shown the ways in which the difference between "public" and "private" space at the College was understood, and acted upon. Through positioning the College within these multiple locations, I have indicated the ways in which the SAC should be understood as a space with permeable boundaries, which was responding to its immediate context, but also a shaping part of the discourse in the "public" sphere at the Cape in this period. Finally, this thesis has shown the ways in which the distinction between "public" and "private" space at this "public" institution was not always distinct, as differential access was granted to particular spaces and kinds of knowledge and discussions.

This thesis has rooted the exploration of the binary of public and private space within the context of the SAC. In doing so, it has indicated the ways in which the political context of South Africa in the period under study affected the ways in which the institution understood

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<sup>1</sup> CM, 22 July 1902.

its own role in the country, and within the British Empire. The discourse of “racial tolerance” which was mobilised in the period following the South African War, for example, is indicative of the way in which the institution was responding to its context. The promotion of an “ideal” masculinity within the College space is also indicative of a particular idea of appropriate gender relations for men within certain sectors of society. Using an institutional archive to explore these and other themes has allowed me to root the exploration of the ideas of status, reputation and “respectability” within a concrete material framework.

The first chapter of this thesis pointed to the ways in which the College provided what they saw as a “distinctive” experience for its students. In doing so, the College space was constructed as “private”, as within the College, its students received an education which comprised a set of values, morals and gendered behaviours which made them different from other men, in particular, at the Cape. By focusing on gender relations within the College, I have shown the ways in which institutional spaces inculcated certain gendered values into their students. The focus on men and masculinities in the first chapter is indicative of the ways in which the SAC saw its role as educating men primarily. The fact that women were admitted to the College in the period under study did not produce a marked shift in the way in which the “ideal” SAC student was thought and spoken about. Rather, the male students’ identities became increasingly dependent on their treatment of women within the College space, and beyond. This chapter contributes to understandings of the creation of institutionalised masculinities in the South African context. In particular, it builds on the work of Robert Morrell, and Wayne Durrill, who have both examined masculinities in South African educational contexts.<sup>2</sup>

The following chapter built on the distinction between “public” and “private” at the College through an examination of the meaning of records, and of the power structures at the College.

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<sup>2</sup> Morrell, *From Boys to Gentlemen*; Durrill, “Shaping a settler elite”.

This chapter showed the ways that within the “private” College space there were multiple layers of “private” knowledge, some of which the students and the Cape Town public were never party to. The role of Council members, in particular, in “public” life at the College problematised the distinction between “public” and “private”, as they were performing both private and public roles in different parts of their professional lives. The examination of the meaning of the written records in the College space also involved a discussion of the meaning of the use of these records by researchers. By viewing the institutional archive as a space which was produced in a particular context, and through referring to the ways in which the College itself saw the archive, the meaning of the creation of records within the College space is addressed.

The third chapter of this thesis focussed on the immediate physical boundaries of the College, indicating the ways in which these boundaries shaped social relations. Discussion of the gendered use of space, and of the use of marginal spaces surrounding the College has once again shown the ways in which the distinction between “public” and “private” space at the College shaped a variety of social interactions. The importance of the institution’s immediate context on the ways in which the space was experienced and used by staff and students is highlighted.

The discussion of the College’s promotion of the discourse of “racial tolerance” in relation to the changing political landscape in South Africa during the period under study indicated some of the ways in which the concerns of the College were intimately linked to concerns of the country more broadly at the time. By showing the ways in which the College defined itself as “English” or “South African” at different points in its history, I have shown the ways in which questions of national importance played out at an institutional level. This points to the significance of the South African “public” sphere, and issues affecting the general public, for the SAC’s own development. Once again, the spatial location of the College within a

wider context of the Union of South Africa indicates the necessity of addressing the importance of space in understanding why institutions function as they do. The discussion in this chapter also rooted the SAC historically, indicating the ways in which its understanding of its location within the Union of South Africa and its relationship to its history, particularly regarding “inclusivity”, were intertwined.

Finally, situating the College within its imperial location through the examination of the Loveday Commission indicated the way in which the SAC was understood from beyond its walls in terms of its global location. The manner in which Cape Town was spoken about as a “colonial” city indicates the way in which the institution should be understood as part of multiple physical and metaphorical spaces at any given point in its history. While the SAC was attempting to mobilise a discourse of racial tolerance within the institution following the South African War, role players beyond the College were invested in its status as a colonial institution.

This thesis has challenged the idea that the development of institutions follows a single linear trajectory, in which ideological shifts in the “ethos” of the institution are made clearly from one point to another. In fact, the idea that there is at any one time, a particular “ethos” which governs all of the different ways in which institutions are related to is negated through the presence of many contradictions in the ways in which the SAC was functioning at different points in the period under study. The discussion of race and admissions in the second chapter is one example of this, but other examples include the dissimilar reactions of students and the Council to the inclusion of women at the College, as well as the emphasis of both a uniquely South African identity and a British imperial identity for the institution concurrently.

The widening framework for analysis in this thesis has allowed for the exploration of broad themes within exploration of the College space. For example, the idea of “respectability” was

a salient one for both students and the College as an institution. The public performance of appropriate behaviour was a way in which SAC students set themselves apart, but was also a way in which the institution distinguished itself from other educational institutions at the Cape. By appearing “clean” and “wholesome” and providing a template for the functioning of the country, in terms of the SAC’s constructed promotion of “racial tolerance”, the SAC protected its reputation as the oldest, and therefore, most important educational institution in the country.

Writing about the SAC in this way has displaced the idea that there is a single essence of what constitutes any particular institution. While the SAC often drew on its history in order to understand and manage current challenges, the history was often represented in a way which fulfilled the needs of the College at particular historical moments. This thesis has raised questions about the relationship between institutional histories and institutions and their own histories. Through showing the ways in which the SAC had achieved longevity and success within South Africa, the SAC positioned itself as central to the life of South Africa. The College also shaped a narrative about the South African “public” sphere, in which men who had been educated at the SAC were central to the “public” world at the Cape. By writing the history of an institution in a way which roots it in its historical context, this thesis has shown the ways in which the archive of the SAC, and changes within it, were products of a specific historical moment. Not only was it in a process of constructing a historical narrative of its own past; it was also reflecting on its place in the past of South Africa.

Exploring the history of a higher education institution has also indicated the ways in which the history of education in South Africa may be a fruitful area of research for historians. As Ludlow has noted, history of education is relatively underdeveloped in South Africa, and in-depth historical research about the SAC has not been produced since the early decades of the

twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> In particular, using an educational institution to root this discussion has been a useful way to explore questions of social change and identity formation, beyond a narrowly institutional and educational focus.

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<sup>3</sup> Ludlow, “State Schooling”, p. 5.

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